Annual Accountability Report

for the fiscal year 2003–2004

Province of Nova Scotia

Annual Accountability Report

FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2003–2004

PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA

NOVA SCOTIA

© Crown copyright, Province of Nova Scotia, 2004

This document is available on the Internet at
<http://www.gov.ns.ca/TPB/publications.htm>

For further information about the Government of Nova Scotia's Annual Accountability Report, please contact:

Treasury and Policy Board
Government of Nova Scotia
PO Box 1617
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Canada B3J 2Y3

Telephone: (902) 424-8910
Fax: (902) 424-7638
E-mail: tpbenquiries@gov.ns.ca

Designed and published in conventional and electronic form by Communications Nova Scotia.

PRINTED IN CANADA

ISSN: 0-88871-838-1

105-02010/

Message from Premier John Hamm

I am pleased to share with you the Government of Nova Scotia's Annual Accountability Report for the 2003-2004 fiscal year. This is the fourth report that we have produced, as required by Nova Scotia's Finance Act.

The Province has made steady progress during this reporting period. We delivered our second consecutive balanced budget, while preserving programs that are important to Nova Scotians. At the same time, we invested in health care, in education, in prosperity. For today and in the future. These investments make Nova Scotia an excellent place to live, to work, to invest and to grow.

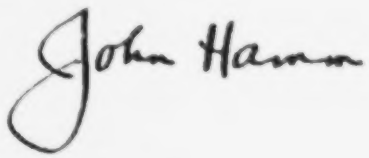
Late in this reporting period, we learned that anticipated federal funding would not flow to the Province as planned. This resulted in hard decisions for the 2004-2005 budget, including a partial adjustment to the tax reductions brought in during 2003-2004.

I mention this here because this report is – for all intents and purposes – a snap-shot of Nova Scotia on March 31, 2004.

Despite the tax changes we were compelled to implement in the 2004-2005 budget, to protect health care and education, almost every Nova Scotian continues to pay lower personal income taxes and more low wage earners will not pay any personal income tax.

Our progress this year shows that Nova Scotians can work together to achieve the goals that are truly important to them.

I wish to thank – and congratulate – the elected men and women who represent their constituents well and whose vision for Nova Scotia extends beyond partisan lines. No one ever said that minority government is easy. But we are proving that it can work.



The Honourable John Hamm
Premier of Nova Scotia

Annual Accountability Report

FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2003–2004

PROVINCE OF NOVA SCOTIA

NOVA SCOTIA

Contents

Introduction 7

Health and Health Care 9
Measuring Our Performance 24

Education and Learning 31
Measuring Our Performance 44

The Economy 49
Measuring Our Performance 58

Families and Communities 69
Measuring Our Performance 81

The Environment 85
Measuring Our Performance 92

Government Services 97
Measuring Our Performance 107

Introduction

The purpose of the Annual Accountability Report 2003-2004 is to report on the accomplishments realized by the Government during the reporting period, with respect to the business plan that was published in April 2003.

The Government of Nova Scotia promised – and delivered – its second consecutive balanced budget in 2003-2004. This proves to our citizens that Government is keeping its promise to live within its means.

Equally important, this proved to the world that Nova Scotia is back on the road to economic prosperity through sound fiscal management. As a result, major international bond rating agencies increased the Province's credit rating, a sign of confidence in Nova Scotia.

In 2003-2004, the Government focussed its social and fiscal policy objectives on the health and well-being of Nova Scotians. The Province worked with people from all walks of life, from every corner of Nova Scotia and beyond, to make us healthier, more prosperous and more self-sufficient.

To accomplish these objectives, the Province's 2003-2004 business plan was grouped around six core business areas. These were the fundamental roles and responsibilities, products and services that Nova Scotians expect from their government.

These six core business areas are:

- Health and health care
- Education and learning
- The economy
- Families and communities
- The environment
- Government services

Health and Health Care

Priorities for 2003–2004

Overall, Nova Scotians are not as healthy as the "average" Canadian, although the gap is neither substantial nor unchangeable. Efforts are underway to make Nova Scotians more active, to help them make healthy lifestyle and nutrition choices, to help them reduce the risk of chronic disease. On March 30, 2003, the Government of Nova Scotia published Your Health Matters, outlining its new approach to health care. The foundation of this approach is promoting good health and preventing health problems.

Now and in the future, Nova Scotia's shifting demographics will have a profound impact on the Province's health care system. The baby boom generation is aging and there are fewer young people to replace them. This has led to declining federal equalization payments because of a lower population, money the Province needs to provide services to its citizens.

In spite of this and other federal funding shortfalls, the Province has continued to make investments that will ensure quality health care for all Nova Scotians. The Health budget remains the largest in government. In the coming year, Nova Scotia, like all the provinces and territories, will press Ottawa to make a fair and steady commitment to the health care needs of its citizens, as recommended by the Romanow Commission in 2002.

PRIORITY: OFFICE OF HEALTH PROMOTION

Created in December 2002, the Office of Health Promotion aims to achieve Nova Scotia's vision of well-being: individuals and communities working together to achieve a healthier population. Its mandate is to improve the ability of individuals, organizations, sectors and government departments to communicate and work together to achieve a healthier population. (Office of Health Promotion)

The Office of Health Promotion worked with health partners, communities and Nova Scotians to develop strategic priorities that address key risk factors in chronic disease, disability and premature death.

PRIORITY: HOME VISITING PROGRAM

Healthy Beginnings is a home visiting program in which public health nurses contact the families of the 10,000 babies born in Nova Scotia annually. (Health, Community Services)

The Healthy Beginnings: Enhanced Home Visiting Initiative provides home visiting support, referral and linkages to other community resources for families of newborns across the province. The enhanced program will ensure that all mothers with newborn children are contacted by a public health nurse. Families with a child needing additional contact will receive home visiting until the child is three years of age.

This program is delivered through the District Health Authorities, which hired additional public health nurses and lay persons to work with the nurses in communities throughout the province. Provincial program standards are in place and preliminary work on a Healthy Beginnings database and evaluation framework was also a focus in 2003-2004.

PRIORITY: TOBACCO STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing Nova Scotia's comprehensive tobacco strategy will continue in 2003-2004 to encourage more Nova Scotians to quit smoking. (Office of Health Promotion, Health, Finance, Education, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations)

The Province's 2003-2004 budget included a $250,000 increase for the Tobacco Strategy, bringing the total annual investment to $1.75 million.

Activity continues on the seven elements of the comprehensive Tobacco Control Strategy including enforcement of the Smoke-Free Places Act and the Tobacco Access Act, enhanced community-based and nicotine treatment programs, and the provincial public awareness campaign.

Evidence of the Strategy's success is reflected in Health Canada's Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey, released in March 2004, which shows that Nova Scotia's overall smoking rate dropped from 30 per cent in 2000 to 25 per cent in 2002. Similarly, the Nova Scotia Student Drug Use Survey showed that teen smoking fell from 36 per cent in 1998 to 23 per cent in 2002.

Research shows that higher cigarette prices are a major factor in preventing youths from starting to smoke and has a direct impact on a person's decision to quit smoking.

Tobacco taxes have increased a number of times over the past three years; most recently on March 17, 2004, with cigarette taxes increasing by $5 per carton. The Province will use some of its additional tobacco tax revenues to support anti-smoking programs. Tobacco sales volumes are down approximately 22 per cent from 2000-2001, although some users are shifting to less expensive tobacco sticks and fine cut tobacco.

Government is taking a proactive approach to reduce possible illegal tobacco activities. For example, taxes must be paid on existing inventories at the time of the tax increase, preventing purchases in large quantities before tax increases take effect.

The Canadian Tobacco Steering Group is working to reduce tobacco thefts and smuggling, and to enhance tobacco markings, making it more traceable. In addition, government is working with law enforcement agencies, the Canada Revenue Agency and other jurisdictions to monitor illegal tobacco activities.

The Department of Education worked with Health, school boards and other partners to promote smoking cessation programs in secondary schools. As well, health education resources such as *Making a Difference: A Teacher's Drug Prevention Resource for Health Education: Grades Primary–6* and *Smoke-Free for Life* (three separate documents for Grades Primary–3, 4–6, and 7–9) were made available.

PRIORITY: ENCOURAGING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Following one of the world's most extensive studies into the activity levels of children, Nova Scotia's first physical activity strategy was launched in 2002. (Office of Health Promotion, Education, Community Services, Aboriginal Affairs)

More than half of all Nova Scotians are not active enough to enjoy health benefits and kids today are less active than ever before, putting them at risk for a host of diseases now and in the future.

In 2003-2004, significant efforts were made to continue the roll-out of the physical activity strategy that was launched the year before.

The Active Kids, Healthy Kids Physical Activity Strategy continues to help Nova Scotians, particularly young Nova Scotians, live healthier, active lives. Six Regional Active Community plans were developed and there are now nine Active School Communities pilot sites across the province. Active Transportation initiatives included hosting the Pathways for People

Active Transportation Tour, school participation in the International Walk to School Day and co-sponsoring of the Atlantic Active Transportation Conference.

The HIGH FIVE program that originated in Ontario was demonstrated in Halifax. The demonstration included a training program for recreation leaders, an activity program demonstrating the program's principles, a quality assessment of a local dance program and an overview of resource materials. HIGH FIVE assists coaches and recreation leaders to promote fair play and encourage physical activity.

The Office of Health Promotion partnered with the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Nova Scotia in the 2003 Summer Active program. Participants were challenged to be more active and to take steps towards healthy living.

The Office of Health Promotion, Youth Secretariat and Senior Citizen's Secretariat dedicated resources to identify/implement new community-based approaches that encourage healthy living among the young and old. Sport and Recreation worked with the Senior Citizen's Secretariat Working Committee and provided $10,000 for the Seniors Games.

As well, the Office of Health Promotion provided grants to help organizations establish sport, recreation and fitness projects that promote active lifestyles. Approximately $99,000 was shared with 74 organizations to support initiatives such as Fitness Instruction Workshops in Inverness.

The Department of Community Services invested $724,461 to promote increased physical activity through Part Day Child Care Material and Resources Grants.

As part of its commitment to healthy living, the Office of Aboriginal Affairs signed a three-year agreement with the 13 Mi'kmaq communities and the Government of Canada, supporting the Mi'kmaq Youth, Recreation and Active Circle for Living. The agreement promotes leadership, active living and healthy lifestyle choices within Mi'kmaq communities.

Education's support for the second year of the eight Active School Communities pilots was reflected in grants totalling $80,000. *Activ8* resources were piloted in Grades Primary to 3. As well, in partnership with universities and school boards, Education developed and field-tested modules for a new Physical Education 10 curriculum. The department monitored implementation of the physical education/physical activity elements of the Time to Learn Strategy.

PRIORITY: RECREATIONAL FACILITY ACCESS

Government will introduce a policy framework to equalize access, standardize rates charged and ensure that facilities are available for community and youth use for as many hours as possible. (Office of Health Promotion, Education)

The Department of Education continued to work on its Community Use of Schools Framework Policy, with implementation expected in 2004-2005.

Resources were made available to communities across the province to ensure that people have safe, accessible facilities such as arenas, pools and ballparks. Close to $2 million was invested to support 128 capital construction/renovation projects. An additional $4 million was invested in four major facility construction projects; along with $130,000 to support facility planning projects and $200,000 for community enhancements, playgrounds and school construction projects.

PRIORITY: HEALTHY CHOICES, HEALTHY EATING

Using a spring 2003 survey, government will develop guidelines for expanding healthy choices on school menus and vending machines, while supporting school programs and providing parents with information that promotes healthy eating for young people. (Office of Health Promotion, Education)

Healthy eating and physical activity contribute to good health and lower the risk of chronic disease. The Province proposed its Healthy Eating Strategy in October 2003 to guide initiatives that support healthy choices.

Building an environment that supports healthy choices means addressing barriers that make these choices difficult. A two-day conference in November 2003 gave participants an opportunity to learn how they can better raise awareness in their own agencies and communities about the need for healthy eating habits and regular physical activity among children and youths.

To make healthy eating choices, children and youths need to have access to healthy food. The Province began working closely with school boards and school principals in the summer and fall 2003. As a result, funding was provided through the

Departments of Education and Agriculture & Fisheries for the Health Promoting Schools Program, a pilot project in the Annapolis Valley which can act as a model for future policies.

New curriculum was implemented for health education in Grades 4 to 6 and professional development workshops were held for lead teachers. This curriculum includes smoking prevention, health benefits of physical activity and nutrition/ healthy food choices components.

Education also conducted a workshop for 38 lead teachers to support the new Health and Personal Development and Relationships 7 curriculum. A teacher's resource and *Health Issues 7* textbooks were provided to each school.

PRIORITY: ILLNESS AND INJURY PREVENTION

Chronic diseases can be prevented or delayed by addressing a variety of common risk factors. Recommendations will be presented to government in the fall of 2003. (Health, Office of Health Promotion)

It is estimated that chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease or arthritis cost taxpayers $3 billion each year. Up to 40 per cent of chronic disease can be prevented by healthy lifestyles and addressing other factors such as income, education and environment.

Understanding that chronic diseases are the leading cause of death in Nova Scotia, the Department of Health and more than 50 stakeholder organizations helped to develop a provincial Chronic Disease Prevention Strategy, which was received in October 2003. It provides a framework for initiatives that target decreased rates of chronic disease and reduced health disparities and improve overall health outcomes. Effective co-ordination will be needed during implementation to ensure proper integration within the Department, with the Office of Health Promotion, across government and around the province.

It is widely recognized that 90 to 95 per cent of injuries are both predictable and preventable. Still, injury is the leading cause of death for Nova Scotians during their first 45 years of life and unintended injuries cost Nova Scotians $372 million in 1999.

The Province's first annual trauma registry report, released in September 2003 showed motor vehicle collisions and unintentional falls are leading causes of major injury. Falls, especially falls by seniors, accounted for $160 million while motor vehicle crashes cost $74 million. A provincial injury prevention strategy, the first in Canada, was submitted to government in November 2003 and an injury prevention co-ordinator was hired. The strategy provides a comprehensive approach including education and public awareness, legislation and enforcement,

public policy, engineering and urban planning, as well as monitoring and surveillance. It also incorporates a Falls Prevention Education program for seniors.

PRIORITY: EMPLOYEE WELLNESS

Government will develop an employee wellness strategy to promote a healthy government workplace. (Public Service Commission, Office of Health Promotion)

In 2003-2004, the Public Service Commission completed the development of a Wellness Program initiative, in collaboration with the private sector and the Office of Health Promotion. Research and analysis were completed to determine the most appropriate framework and the PSC's leadership role was defined.

Workplace anti-smoking programs were introduced and links were established with smoking cessation programs that are provided by local addiction services. A workplace program/resource was developed to help employers support employees who stopped smoking. This resource has also been provided to staff in the District Health Authorities to promote smoking cessation programs in other local workplaces.

Nova Scotia's first School & Workplace Health Champions Award was introduced. Winning health promotion strategies will be featured in a provincial media campaign and winners will receive a financial reward to support ongoing healthy school and workplace initiatives.

Health Care Services

PRIORITY: MULTI-YEAR FUNDING FOR FRONT-LINE HEALTH CARE

Nova Scotia will increase funding for hospitals and other services provided by the District Health Authorities by seven per cent per year to support front-line health care. Patients will receive higher quality health care and encounter shorter wait lists. (Health)

Government introduced a multi-year funding approach and increased funding to all District Health Authorities and the IWK Health Centre beginning in 2003-2004. For 2003-2004, the first year increased non-salary funding by $20 million.

PRIORITY: ENHANCED CARDIAC CARE

The Department of Health will provide up to $5 million in 2003-2004 to enhance cardiac care in Nova Scotia. (Health)

The Provincial Cardiac Advisory Council was established in January 2004 to develop a co-ordinated approach to providing cardiac services. By the end of fiscal 2003-2004, the Council began developing a strategic plan and an inventory of programs and services across the province.

In 2003-2004, $4.9 million was invested to improve cardiac care in Nova Scotia. This funding enabled the Capital District Health Authority to add equipment, staff and other resources to reduce wait times for cardiac surgeries and care from 43 weeks in December 2002 to nine weeks in December 2003.

PRIORITY: REDUCING WAIT LISTS

Government is working with health professionals to shorten wait lists to address less critical health problems before they become critical. (Health)

Reducing wait times has been addressed through a variety of means during the past year. The Provincial Wait Time Monitoring Steering Committee released its report in January 2004, recommending common wait time measurement tools and standards for District Health Authorities and services; resources have been allocated to address this need.

Investments of $1.3 million to the IWK Health Centre and $5.8 million to Capital Health was announced in November 2003 for additional medical equipment that will help Nova Scotians get tests, treatment and care faster. In January 2004, funding was announced to open 25 surgical beds and an additional operating room at the QEII Health Sciences Centre.

The National Ambulatory Care Reporting System is being used by four hospitals to improve the collection of emergency room wait time data. As well, Capital Health has implemented a 10-point plan to further reduce emergency room wait times at the QEII Health Sciences Centre. In spring 2003, Colchester East Hants District Health Authority, the Nova Scotia Emergency Nurses Association and the Department launched a public awareness campaign to help people understand how an emergency room functions.

PRIORITY: IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

In 2003, government released its strategic direction for mental health, the first province to do so. Some $2 million were to be invested in 2003-2004 to establish community supports for people with mental health disabilities. (Health)

In 2003, government released its strategic direction for mental health. Consistent with this direction, Nova Scotia became the first province to develop mental health system standards. The Province invested $2 million in 2003-2004 to implement the standards and, at the same time, to use them to increase funding equity across health districts and the IWK.

District Health Authority and IWK Hospital self-assessments, community support programs and crisis services were targeted as priorities and received the bulk of the new funding. Additionally, approximately $150,000 was awarded to consumer initiated mental health projects designed to increase consumer involvement in planning and engaging in mental health related activities.

The department also embarked on a provincewide diagnostic training program for mental health clinicians, continued to develop a new Mental Health Act, initiated a new reporting system for mental health services and begin pilot testing the Health of the Nations Outcome Scale in three health districts.

Apart from the departmental activities, Capital Health added six new shared care sites for a total of nine. These shared care clinics link primary care physicians with mental health professionals to better identify and treat common mental health illnesses such as depression and anxiety.

PRIORITY: CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

A top health priority is to expand services in all districts to meet the special mental health needs of children and youth in Nova Scotia. (Health)

Two new intensive community-based mental health treatment teams for children and youths were established in Cape Breton and at the IWK Health Centre. Tele-health is being used across the province, as it makes it much easier and practical for practitioners to consult with treatment teams elsewhere in the province. In addition, a fully operational treatment team including psychiatry, psychology, social work and nursing members was established at the Waterville Facility. A Forensic Community Case Management Program was developed to support youth released on conditional discharge by the Criminal Code Review Board.

In January 2004, a new 12-bed residential rehabilitation facility was opened in Halifax, providing medium to long term care for youths with severe and persistent mental health or behavioral issues. In addition, $175,000 was provided to Halifax's Laing House to help young people with severe mental health problems.

PRIORITY: RECRUITING AND KEEPING HEALTH CARE WORKERS

In 2003-2004, government will complete detailed research, along with an analysis of training and workplace issues, to build comprehensive health human resource strategies. (Health)

Throughout 2003-2004, the government worked to improve the recruitment and retention of health care professionals. Providing a guaranteed income to physicians who provided services not covered under the fee for service plan increases Nova Scotia's physician recruitment and retention efforts. An additional 30 general practitioners and seven specialists were recruited between April and December 2003. The number of physicians benefiting from alternative funding arrangements rose from nine per cent in 1998 to 21 per cent in 2003.

The Province invested $6.4 million to support its efforts to recruit and retain nursing professionals. In November 2003, the Nursing Strategy website was launched, consolidating information on nursing grants, bursary programs, co-operative learning opportunities, relocation allowances, educational institutions and professional organizations.

Emergency Measures co-ordinators funded Advanced Care Paramedic Training for 25 paramedics in 2003-2004, while Emergency Health Services provided bursaries for 15 paramedics.

A bursary program was established to support training in Medical Laboratory Technology. In January 2004, 25 students began a two-year training program at New Brunswick Community College. In return for bursary funding, graduates will agree to work in the Nova Scotia health system for two years following graduation.

Work continued throughout 2003-2004 to streamline the process for assessing qualifications of internationally trained specialists and to provide additional training opportunities to help meet Canadian standards. The College of Physicians and Surgeons is playing a major role in program development along with other community stakeholders.

PRIORITY:
TRAINING MORE NURSES

Government will invest $7.1 million to train 240 nurses over the next four years. (Health)

Nova Scotia's Nursing Strategy continues its efforts to recruit and retain nurses for our health care system. Beginning in 2003, 60 seats were added to nursing education programs in the province. As well, the number of nursing graduates rose from 137 in 1999 to 186 in 2003.

PRIORITY:
TRAINING MORE DOCTORS

Eight new first-year positions will be added to the Dalhousie Medical School in 2003; government will work with the medical school and other partners to explore strategies to train more doctors and encourage them to set up practice in Nova Scotia. (Health)

The Health Department worked with Dalhousie Medical School to fund spaces for eight additional undergrads in the physician training program.

PRIORITY: PRIMARY HEALTH CARE RENEWAL

Between 2003 and 2005, at least $17 million will be invested to support the development of Primary Health Care Renewal through the Primary Health Care Transition Fund. In 2003-2004, the Department of Health will involve primary health care leaders and and culturally diverse populations including African Canadians, First Nations, Acadians and francophones and immigrants. They will develop guidelines and policies that address diversity and social inclusion issues in primary health care. (Health)

In June 2003, the Minister of Health received a report from the Advisory Committee on Primary Health Care Renewal. Based on its recommendations, District Health Authorities received more that $3 million from the Primary Health Care Transition Fund to support innovative initiatives. These include DHA funding for primary health care co-ordination, video conferencing equipment for collaborative practice workshops,

renovations and equipment to support nurse practitioners in collaborative practice teams. Recruitment efforts were successful in attracting six of eight new primary health care nurse practitioners needed in the system. In spring 2004, a primary maternity care working group was established to integrate midwives into collaborative practice teams.

In 2003, a three-year Diversity and Social Inclusion in Primary Health Care Initiative began to raise awareness and to meet the needs of Nova Scotia's culturally diverse residents. its objective is to develop culturally-inclusive policy and guidelines through workshops, links with chronic disease prevention strategy development, and liaison with District Health Authorities and provincial programs.The DHAs, Cancer Care Nova Scotia and Diabetes Care Nova Scotia held workshops on cultural diversity and evaluated cancer education initiatives within diverse communities. As well, the department hired a French-language Health Services Co-ordinator to better provide service to French-speaking Nova Scotians.

Improved Services to Seniors

PRIORITY: CONSULTATION ON SENIORS SERVICES

Government will consult in 2003 on options and services available to seniors, to guide decisions on growth and delivery of services for seniors, and lead to changes in the Homes for Special Care Act. (Health)

Ministers responsible for seniors met in November 2003 to discuss the opportunities and challenges faced by Canada's aging population. In addition, the Health department worked closely with the Senior Citizen's Secretariat to prepare for a comprehensive consultation on Seniors Health Services.

PRIORITY: IMPROVING ACCESS TO NURSING HOMES

In 2000, the province began co-ordinating the wait list for nursing home and residential care facility beds. This information will be part of a review of services for seniors, to determine the need for more nursing home beds. (Health)

The Continuing Care Review is addressing Nova Scotia's growing numbers of seniors. The Province made 30 additional nursing home beds available across the province in 2003-2004, and more will be added in 2004-2005. This will reduce reduce wait time for services, ensure appropriate care, and free up acute care beds.

PRIORITY: PROVIDING BETTER CARE FOR SENIORS

In 2003-2004, the Province will invest $400,000 to begin education and advisory work that will lead to improved care for seniors with aggressive or other challenging behaviors. (Health)

The Department of Health worked closely with the Senior Citizen's Secretariat and other partners to improve care to seniors. In June 2003, the Secretariat distributed medication record books to help seniors keep track of prescription and non-prescription medications. In December 2003, a call for proposals was issued for a new education program for health care workers involved with individuals with challenging behaviors.

PRIORITY: REDUCING NURSING HOME COSTS FOR SENIORS

Government will continue to reduce health care costs for seniors. In 2003-2004, Nova Scotia will continue its multi-year plan to reduce the daily rate that some seniors now pay in nursing homes. (Health)

In 2003-2004, the Department of Health implemented a $12.75/day health care subsidy for all residents in long-term care facilities, the first phase of the Provinces plan to cover all health care costs for al long term care residents.

PRIORITY:
STABILIZING HOME CARE

In 2003-2004, government will continue to invest more in home care, $1.1 million, to protect the current level of services. (Health)

The home care budget has increased from $69.8 million to $127 million between 1999 and 2003 to maintain service levels and to reduce waiting lists. In 2003-2004, bursaries totalling approximately $270,000 were awarded to help prospective home support workers attain Continuing Care Assistant certification. This increases the number of available home support workers.

PRIORITY:
AFFORDABLE DRUGS

Government is working to keep drugs affordable for the 95,000 seniors insured through the provincial Pharmacare program. (Health)

In 2003-2004, the Pharmacare program froze premium and co-pays at the previous year's levels while ensuring that seniors did not pay more than $30 towards the cost of an individual prescription.

Health System Management

PRIORITY: ACCOUNTABILITY FOR RESULTS

In 2003-2004, government will strengthen accountability and reporting on results of the health-care system. (Health)

In March 2004, the Health Minister released the first annual *Minister's Report to Nova Scotians: Confident Change for Quality Care*, a follow-up to the 2003 *Your Health Matters* plan.

Value-for-money audits were completed in the Colchester East Hants and the Pictou County District Health Authorities, with results expected early in 2004-2005.

To strengthen the commitment to accountability highlighted in the national 2003 health accord, the Department of Health is working with its counterparts across the country to develop national health care indicators.

PRIORITY: HEALTH EQUIPMENT INVESTMENTS

Between 2003 and 2006, another $45 million will be invested in diagnostic equipment. Priorities will be developed in consultation with the District Health Authorities. (Health)

Giving doctors, nurses and other health professionals the equipment they need is critical to providing quality care and reducing wait lists. In 2003-2004, $1.3 million was invested in equipment for Halifax's IWK Health Centre and $5.8 million in the Capital Health district. Investments were also made in communities across the province.

PRIORITY: RENOVATED HOSPITALS

The province will continue to invest in hospitals, with dedicated funding in spring 2003. Government will work with the District Health Authorities to establish priorities. (Health)

In 2003-2004, the District Health Authorities shared a $10 million investment earmarked for hospital repairs, renovations and new construction projects. An additional $20 million was invested in larger construction projects, including $1.8 million to the IWK Health Centre to support family-centred patient care and the latest genetics treatment. The Cape Breton Regional Hospital received $7.4 million to establish a renal dialysis unit to meet growing demand for this service. The Dartmouth General received $2.6 million to expand its renal dialysis unit, building on services offered through Capital Health and existing satellite dialysis units.

PRIORITY: HEALTH INFORMATION SYSTEMS

A new, shared electronic hospital information system being implemented to give health care providers access to a patient's health records regardless of where in the province they seek care. (Health)

Roll-out of the Nova Scotia Hospital Information System is on schedule; 13 of 34 hospitals across the province were running the system – in whole or in part – in 2003-2004.

Health: Measuring our Performance

HEALTH HUMAN RESOURCES POSITIONS FILLED

Outcome:
Access to quality health care

What does the measure tell us?

One measure of the supply and distribution of health personnel is the percentage of primary health human resource positions filled in under-served areas. Under-served areas are defined as those that have a history of recruitment and retention difficulties, where recruiting by local committees has been unsuccessful for more than six months, and where the medical needs of the community are not being otherwise served. Those areas that are designated as 'under-served' have incentive programs to support physician recruitment.

Where are we now?

Of the 42 physician vacancies identified in under-served areas, 34 (81 per cent) were filled.

The number of physicians in under-served areas changes rapidly because of deaths, retirements, voluntary relocation of providers, etc. and successful recruitment. As well, the number of areas that meet the "under-served" criteria changes. the number of under-served areas fell from 44 in 2003 to 42 in 2004.

Nova Scotia is focussing on building multi-professional care teams. Four pilot Strengthening Primary Care Initiative sites moved to the District Health Authorities with sustainable funding; plus, eight new Primary Health Care Nurse Practitioner positions were funded for collaborative practice in community clinics. The Department of Health is engaged in health sector human resources planning to address the supply and distribution of professionals and other workers across the province.

Where do we want to be?

The Province's target is to fill 80 per cent or more health sector positions in under-served areas and this will require ongoing recruitment efforts. The department continues to support physician recruitment initiatives throughout the province through website vacancy listings, a recruitment guide, advertising and incentives.

AMBULANCE RESPONSE TIMES

Outcome:
Access to quality health care

What does the measure tell us?

The industry standard for response time from ambulance dispatch to arrival at the emergency scene is nine minutes or less for lights and siren calls in urban areas. This standard is based on chances of survival after a cardiac arrest. The shorter the response time, the greater the chance of survival.

Where are we now?

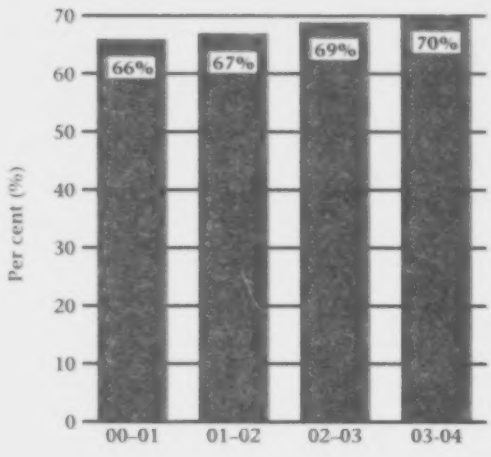
In 2003-2004, ambulances arrived at an emergency scene within nine minutes 70 per cent of the time; 91.5 per cent of the time for calls in urban/densely populated areas. This is an improvement since 2002-2003, when ambulance response time was within nine minutes 69 per cent of the time; 90 per cent of the time for calls in urban/densely populated areas.

Where do we want to be?

By 2004-2005, the Nova Scotia government wants response times, from ambulance dispatch to arrival at the emergency, to be within nine minutes at least 68 per cent of the time. All efforts will be made to continue to meet or exceed the target for response time.

Percentage of Ambulance Response Times Within Nine Minutes

Nova Scotia, 2000–2001 to 2003–2004



Source: Emergency Health Services, Nova Scotia Department of Health

YOUTH SMOKING (AGES 12–19)

Outcome: Healthier lifestyles

What does the measure tell us?

Habits adopted during the teen years tend to be maintained well into adult life. This measure tells us about smoking among young people (aged 12–19 years) and the number of adults who may be smokers in the future. Preventing or reducing smoking among young people has important long term benefits such as reduced smoking among adults and the prevention of serious illness.

Where are we now?

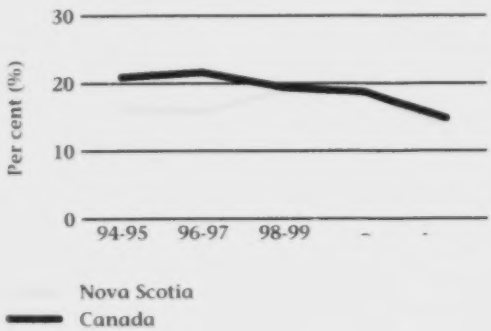
According to the Canadian Community Health Survey, 13.5 per cent of Nova Scotia's youths smoked in 2003, compared to 15.8 per cent in 1996-1997. In Canada, the smoking rate in youth declined from 21.6 per cent to 14.8 per cent.

Where do we want to be?

Our aim is to decrease the percentage of youth who smoke. Strategies to achieve this target include continued implementation of all components of the Comprehensive Tobacco Strategy.

Percentage of Youth (12–19) Who Smoke

Nova Scotia and Canada, 1994–95 to 2002–03



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY/ INACTIVITY

Outcome: Healthier lifestyles

What does the measure tell us?

Physical inactivity is measured by calculating the proportion of the population aged 12 years and older who report being physically active less than once per week or never. The department's goal is to increase physical activity among Nova Scotians.

Where are we now?

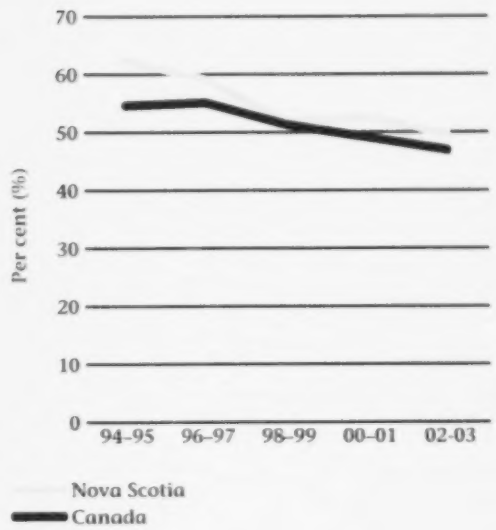
In 2003, 49.7 per cent of Nova Scotians reported being physically inactive, as compared to 46.9 per cent of Canadians. There has been a 12.8 per cent reduction in Nova Scotians reporting physical inactivity since 1994-1995.

Where do we want to be?

Regular physical activity is associated with many benefits, including improved cardio-vascular and mental health. We want to increase physical activity through joint initiatives such as the Provincial Physical Activity Strategy for Children and Youth, the Chronic Disease-prevention Strategy, and curriculum revisions to increase physical activity in schools. The Department of Health participates in these initiatives.

Percentage Reporting Little or No Physical Activity

Nova Scotia and Canada, 1994–95 to 2002–03



Source: National Population Health Survey and Canadian Community Health Survey, Statistics Canada.

BODY MASS INDEX

Outcome: Healthier lifestyles

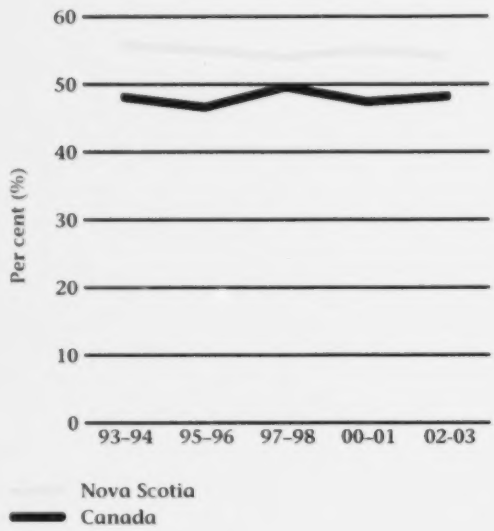
What does the measure tell us?

Body weight is influenced by genetic, gender, age and lifestyle factors such as poor eating habits and inadequate physical activity. While a healthy body weight for a given height is associated with a reduced risk of health problems, being overweight or obese is associated with an increased risk of health problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes, gall bladder disease and pregnancy complications.

The Body Mass Index (BMI) is a common method for calculating whether one's weight is in a healthy range based on one's height, and is a valid measurement for healthy adults aged 20-65. A BMI should not be considered as the sole measurement of either one's body composition or level of physical fitness. According to current guidelines, a BMI between 20 and 25 is considered within a healthy weight range.

Body Mass Index in Excess of Health Range (25+)

Nova Scotia vs Canada, 1993-94 to 2003-03



Source: National Population Health Survey and Canadian Community Health Survey, Statistics Canada.

Where are we now?

Since 1994, Nova Scotians have consistently reported being more overweight and obese than the average Canadian. Between 1994 and 2003, the percentage of the population reporting themselves as being overweight or obese declined slightly, from 54.8 per cent to 54.1 per cent. The Canadian rate increased slightly, going from 47.4 per cent in 1994 to 48.2 per cent in 2003. In the 2002-2003 Business Plan, BMI was reported using the Canadian BMI standard; the measure now amalgamates international and Canadian standards.

Where do we want to be?

By 2004-2005, we want to reduce the number of Nova Scotians whose body weight increases their risk for health problems to 52 per cent. Toward this end, the Department of Health continues to develop and strengthen strategic linkages in the community and other sectors, with the Nova Scotia Alliance for Healthy Eating and local public health services, to promote behaviors, capacity, and policies that support and protect healthy living.

VACCINATION COVERAGE (FLU SHOT)

Outcome: Healthier lifestyles

What does the measure tell us?

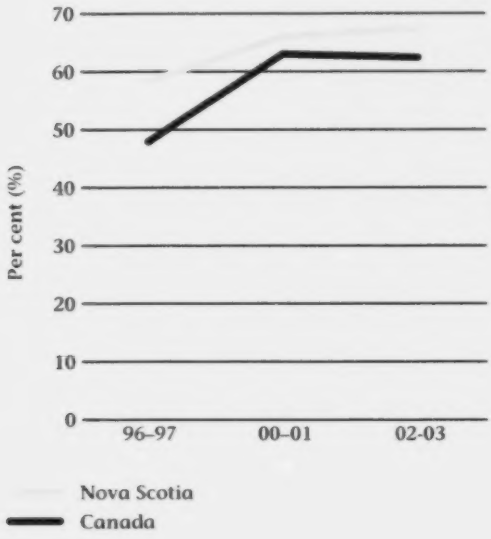
Vaccination coverage is measured by calculating the percentage of people (aged 65 years and older) who reported having their last flu shot during the past year. By increasing the number of people who receive flu shots, we can decrease the burden of illness on vulnerable populations – such as the elderly – and reduce the strain on the health system.

Where are we now?

In 2003, 67.5 per cent of Nova Scotian's seniors reported having a flu shot in the last year, compared to 62.4 per cent of all Canadians seniors. This is an increase since 2000-2001, when 66.0 per cent of Nova Scotian seniors reported receiving flu shots. While Canada reports a 0.6 per cent reduction in the number of seniors who received a flu shot, Nova Scotia's percentage continues to rise. Fewer people being hospitalized for influenza and pneumonia may reflect the success of immunization programs and aggressive public awareness campaigns.

Seniors (65+) Immunized for Flu in the Past Year

Nova Scotia vs Canada, 1996–97 to 2002–03



Source: National Population Health Survey and Canadian Community Health Survey, Statistics Canada.

Where do we want to be?

Immunization against the flu is an important public health intervention. By 2004-2005, the Province aims to increase the percentage of its senior population who receive influenza vaccinations to 80 per cent.

Education and Learning

Priorities for 2003–2004

In 2003-2004, the Government of Nova Scotia continued to invest in education because it is an investment in the future prosperity of the province. These initiatives ranged from building and upgrading schools to developing a new debt reduction strategy for students to buying computers for classrooms.

Learning for Life continued to improve on education for special needs students, to improve the learning experience for all children, and to promote a culture of life-long learning.

As promised, smaller class sizes – which allow teachers to provide more personalized instruction and attention to students – are in place for Grade Primary and this initiative will expand in the coming years. Teachers also benefited from professional development programs, with efforts focussed on mathematics, science and literacy.

More than 80 per cent of the Grade 9 students in 2000 graduated in 2003, which is important because high school graduation is an essential prerequisite for higher education which sets the stage for improved employment and higher earnings.

Keeping parents informed about their child's education was also a priority in 2003-2004. The department launched a new website in March 2004. The site contains information about public school education policies and programs, and initial reports show the website is an effective communications tool. New report cards were also introduced.

Learning for Life: Planning for Student Success

PRIORITY: SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Almost 20 per cent of students require some level of special programming or services during their school years. funding will be targeted in 2003-2004 for resources to meet diverse student needs. (Education)

Under the Department of Education's Learning for Life: Planning for Student Success strategy for students with special needs, funding was targeted to new

programming intended to resolve service gaps and improve the professional service provider to student ratio. This added more resource teachers, school psychologists and speech-language pathologists to the system, and helped school boards to provide assistive technology and related services.

The department continued to implement its multi-year response to the Report of the Special Education Implementation Review Committee. The plan includes initiatives and activities between 2002-2003 to 2005-2006.

PRIORITY: REDUCING CLASS SIZES

Almost 27 per cent of Grades Primary to 2 classes in Nova Scotia had more than 25 students in 2001-2002. In 2003-2004, government will add approximately 75 teachers to the system to ensure that there are no more than 25 students per Grade Primary class.
(Education)

As of September 2003, the 25-student class size cap was achieved in all but 32 schools. The department works with school boards to monitor cases where class size exceeds the cap.

28 schools were allowed a maximum of 27 students, because of one or more of the following circumstances:

- if an additional class(es) is necessary but the school does not have space for additional classes;
- if, in meeting the class size target, a class of 26-27 students would result in a combined class and the School Advisory Council supports a combined class of 26-27 students;
- if a school can demonstrate French Immersion enrollment decline from Grade Primary through Grade 3, a class of 26 or 27 may be established.

Only four schools exceeded the 27-student limit.

Funding for teachers was part of the total school board allocations in 2003-2004.

PRIORITY: INCREASING LEARNING SUCCESS IN HIGH SCHOOLS

Government will launch four pilots to explore the diverse needs of learners in high schools.
(Education)

The high school graduation rate has continued to increase, rising from 79 per cent to 81.6 per cent between 2000 and June, 2003.

A teaching aid was developed to support the new English 10 Plus option; it will be tested in 2004-2005. The department also cost-shared a pilot program with the Halifax Regional School Board to provide more learning time and support for literacy at Halifax West High School.

PRIORITY: MATHEMATICS STUDY

Improving mathematics education will be a priority for 2003-2004. The Mathematics Strategy will include professional development for math leaders and principals, parent information to support math learning, new high school math courses, examinations for students, a comprehensive report on the mathematics program assessments. (Education)

All mathematics high school courses, including Mathématiques pré-emploi and Mathématiques pré-calcul 12, were introduced in the Acadian schools in September 2003.

Five regional two-day professional development sessions, focussing on Grades 4 to 9 math curriculum outcomes, teaching tools and techniques, were delivered to 115 Grade 7, 8 or 9 resource teachers and to 19 school board personnel. Each participant received a kit containing teaching aids, curriculum outcome documents and a Math and Special Education literature review.

PRIORITY: NEW REPORT CARDS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Government is committed to providing parents with regular, clear information on their children's progress, and explore the use of a standard report card in 2003-2004. (Education)

Aspects of the Reporting Policy Framework and report card templates were revised for the 2003-2004 pilot, and new school communications plans were implemented in September, 2003. Consultations were held with school board representatives, pilot schools and the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, and included discussions about using technology in report card production. The new standard report cards should be introduced for Grades Primary to 9 in 2005-2006, and at senior high schools in 2006-2007.

PRIORITY: TEACHER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Learning for Life plan identifies the need for professional development for teachers. Areas of focus in 2003-2004 will be mathematics, science and literacy. (Education)

Professional development workshops were held for elementary and secondary school teachers and other education professionals, regarding the Information Economy Initiative, spelling and reading, business and apprenticeship, technology and special needs education. A new resource, for teaching spelling, was developed. Specific professional development initiatives are included in the Department of Education's accountability report, which is available on their website.

PRIORITY: HELPING PARENTS PROMOTE LEARNING

Government will develop resources for parents to support their essential role in their children's education. (Education)

Three Positive Parenting workshops were delivered within the Halifax, Annapolis Valley and Chignecto-Central school board regions. They were designed to increase parents' knowledge of the school system, related policies and procedures, and their rights and responsibilities, and to equip them with more knowledge about resources and supports that are available to help them assist their children's education.

A website launched in March 2004 lists resources available for students, shows ways that parents can help their children to succeed, and public school programs and policies of interest to parents.

The department distributed copies of *Writers in Action: A Guide for Parents* to Grade 4 parents. *I Get It!* resources for teachers and parents were provided for Grades Primary to 4 and fact sheets for Adaptations, Inclusive Schooling and Enrichment were completed.

PRIORITY: COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

Government's Program of Learning Assessment for Nova Scotia will continue to provide reliable information on student achievement in specific curriculum areas. The following assessments are scheduled for 2003-2004: international students; elementary mathematics and literacy programs; Grade 12 testing. School achievement indicators will also be developed.
(Education)

The Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA), focussing on Mathematics, was administered in May 2003 to 15-year-old students.

The Elementary Mathematics Program Assessment was administered in June 2003 to Grade 8 students. Development of the Junior High Mathematics Program Assessment was completed in March 2004. The Elementary Literacy Assessment was administered in October 2003 to Grade 6 students. Provincial Grade 12 Examinations were administered in June 2003 and January 2004.

Development of the English and French School Achievement Indicators Program Science Assessment was completed in February 2004.

PRIORITY: TIME TO LEARN STRATEGY

New instructional time guidelines will be introduced in fall 2003 and implemented in September 2004 to ensure that students have adequate instructional time to meet achievement expectations.
(Education)

Time to Learn instructional time requirements for language arts and mathematics were introduced in all schools, Grades Primary to 6. The department also announced new instructional time requirements in Grades 7 and 8 for language arts and mathematics, that will be implemented in September 2004.

PRIORITY: LITERACY PROGRAMS

Curriculum and professional development and resources will continue, to help teachers assess students' reading development and needs.
(Education)

Training was provided for 27 Grades Primary to 6 literacy mentors, through the Active Young Readers program. At the junior high level, students received 98,000 Active Readers 8 learning books and Grade 8 teachers received 2,528 professional resources.

Two-day Literacy Team 7 workshops were held for 384 teachers and principals; an intensive three-day workshop was conducted for 93 Active Readers 8 lead teachers. The department set aside two days' Active Readers 8 in-service education for Grades 7 to 9 teachers and principals.

At the elementary and junior high levels, roll-out of Lecteurs actifs continued during 2003-2004.

Elementary Literacy Assessment and Database: The Elementary Literacy Assessment was administered to Grade 6 students in October 2003. Schools received a report on each student in January 2004 and a support plan template for students requiring remedial support. Parents also received reports concerning their children in March 2004. General school results were published March 2004; a comprehensive and technical report for each school was in development in March 2004.

The database was completed and it provides schools, teachers and parents with information on student literacy and school level literacy.

Initiatives that provide increased time and support for literacy at senior high school: A teaching resource was developed to support the new English 10 Plus option and it will be piloted in 2004-2005. The department cost-shared a pilot program in the Halifax Regional School Board to provide additional time and support for literacy at Halifax West High School.

Family and Adult Literacy: Eight family literacy projects were funded across Nova Scotia. Good practice guidelines for family literacy were developed and released in November 2003. The provincial service agreement was implemented with more than 30 community-based literacy organizations.

PRIORITY: RACIAL EQUITY POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The Racial Equity Policy will be implemented in 2003-2004. (Education)

A Racial Equity Policy Work Group was established. A second-phase implementation plan was developed for elementary grades and will be implemented in 2004-2005. Strategic planning sessions were held with the Race Relations, Cross-Cultural Awareness and Human Rights Co-ordinators, and provincial priorities for implementing the Racial Equity Policy were identified. Racial Equity Policy training was provided to school boards.

PRIORITY: CODE OF CONDUCT IMPLEMENTATION

Guidelines on the provincial Code of Conduct will be in place in September 2003. (Education)

The Code of Conduct Guidelines and the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training Behavior Resource Guide have been completed. Implementation training is ongoing and anticipated to continue during 2004-2005.

PRIORITY: SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

Government will continue with improvements to school infrastructure. (Education)

The department has identified school capital needs through the continued operation of the School Capital Construction Committee, reporting to the government on prioritized capital funding needs. The delivery of school capital projects is ongoing.

In September 2003, Avonview Regional, South Colchester and Northumberland Regional high schools opened their doors, joined by North Nova Education Centre in November. Schools under construction in Truro and Sydney are expected to open in September 2004; Shelburne Regional High should open in early 2005.

Cumberland Elementary and Amherst Elementary should also open in early 2005.

PRIORITY: SCHOOL ADDITIONS, ALTERATIONS AND REPAIRS

Eight schools will be added to and altered under a phased multi-year program. In addition, $3 million will be available for school repairs and non-capital renovations in 2003-2004. (Education)

The $3-million repair and non-capital renovation funds were available during 2003-2004, as planned; additions and alterations to enhance or replace major school buildings, on a priority basis, continues. Eight addition/alteration projects are underway and should be completed within two years. Schools have been added to and altered under the phased multi-year program. A database of school renovation and maintenance needs has been developed.

PRIORITY: TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENTS

The Information Economy Initiative supports teaching and learning through technology, including the provision of hardware and software, professional development and technical support. More than 900 computers and software will be added to Grades 4 to 6 in 2003-2004. (Education)

The Information Economy Initiative (IEI) Extension provided 1,468 new computers to Grades 4 to 6 schools, along with other equipment and accessories such as digital still and digital video cameras, and curriculum-related software. An additional 3,500 computers were provided through the Technology Recycling Program, a private-public partnership that refurbishes used computer equipment for distribution to schools. These computers support student learning and achievement in Nova Scotia's public schools and prepare students for today's labour market where technology and communications are so important.

Thirty-three school board technicians were funded as well as 4,585 days of professional development for teachers.

Skills Nova Scotia Framework and Action Plan

PRIORITY: RELEASE A SKILLS NOVA SCOTIA ACTION PLAN

An Skills Nova Scotia action plan and report will be released in 2003. (Education)

A labour force planning committee was convened and provided input to the 2003-2004 Skills Nova Scotia Action Plan and 2002-2003 Annual Report. The 2003-2004 action plan was released in the winter of 2003.

The Partners Advisory Council on Workforce Skills met in 2003 to provide a broad perspective on labour market issues in Nova Scotia, including the development of a series of career development programs and services.

PRIORITY: PROMOTE ADULT LEARNING

The department will continue a system of programs for adults seeking to improve their literacy and essential skills, and/or graduate from high school. (Education)

The Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL) provided more than $3.7 million to support the Adult Learning Program and public school program credits leading to the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults. More than 2,000 adults were enrolled and 430 received their high school diploma during 2003-2004.

To achieve its goals, the NSSAL partnered with the colleges, adult high school programs in the school boards, and community-based groups. NSSAL shared more than $2.5 million with more than 30 literacy organizations to support approximately 140 programs helping more than 2,100 learners.

The department helped the Nova Scotia Health Care Human Resource Sector Council to implement a Prior Learning Assessment Recognition process for the Continuing Care Assistant Program. As well, the Department of Education and Nova Scotia Community College recognized additional post-secondary credits as electives towards the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults.

The Adult Learning Program Level III curriculum was rewritten to include literacy, numeracy, employability, inclusivity and technology; a piloting phase began in February 2004. Level IV Introductory Sociology and Technical Communications courses were developed to expand the course selection options.

PRIORITY: INCREASE APPRENTICESHIP

In response to business and labour needs, the department will promote careers in skilled trades and enhance apprenticeship training over the next five years. In 2003-2004, training will be provided to 45 per cent of active apprentices, a youth apprenticeship program will be established, and work will proceed on revising the Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act. (Education)

Training was provided to slightly more than 45 per cent of active apprentices. In 2003-2004, the department developed a Nova Scotia Youth Apprenticeship framework. The department also provided support to boards for related Youth Pathways and Transitions/College Preparation initiatives.

The Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act was proclaimed in 2003 and the Trade Regulations are being revised.

Meetings were held with the business, industry and labour sectors, and associated government agencies to promote careers in skilled trades. The partners are working on a co-ordinated marketing program and a funding strategy. The department worked with its sector partners to introduce an out-of-school pilot program and two summer pilot programs were conducted.

Curriculum resources and professional development were provided for teachers and curriculum frameworks were developed for several courses.

PRIORITY: RENEGOTIATE THE LABOUR MARKET DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT

The federal and provincial governments will work together to ensure the Agreement advances such as apprenticeship, learning and earning, employability, immigration and labour market information. (Education)

Nova Scotia's departments of Education, Economic Development, Intergovernmental Affairs and Community Services worked on a negotiation position for the Labour Market Development Agreement. This position will be influenced by the outcome of the Forum of Labour Market Ministers Multilateral Framework discussions which were still ongoing as of March 31, 2004.

The Canada-Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework priorities from 2002-2003, Apprenticeship, Learning and Earning, Employability, Immigration and Labour Market Information, were maintained for 2003-2004.

PRIORITY: LABOUR MARKET LEADERSHIP

The Department of Education will take on the responsibilities of the Forum of Labour Market Ministers Secretariat for a period of two years beginning in April 2003. The secretariat facilitates inter-jurisdictional discussion and co-operation between the federal and provincial/territorial government on labour market issues. (Education)

A comprehensive set of occupational employment projections for Nova Scotia was developed and three publications: *Labour Market Outlook*, *Industrial Outlook* and *Occupational Outlook* were produced. These provide a foundation for career and labour market information products such as *Career Options: An Occupational Handbook for Nova Scotians*. Another publication, *Prepared Occupational and Skill Shortages: The Backgrounder*, is now available on the Skills Nova Scotia website.

Nova Scotia's labour market information products, data and research initiatives

were inventoried and the department participated in a Canadian Occupational Projection System Partnership project to enhance provincial occupational projection models. Background work for an occupational supply and demand analysis framework for Nova Scotia was completed. Also during this year, the department participated on the Data Steering Committee of the Forum of Labour Market Ministers Multilateral/ Labour Market Information Working Group to develop an action plan to address critical labour market data needs.

A Nova Scotia Symposium on Career Development was held in September 2003, involving 160 delegates representing a wide range of stakeholders. Education also initiated an asset mapping process through the Employability Committee of the Canada-Nova Scotia and Learning Framework.

PRIORITY: ENERGY SECTOR EMPLOYMENT

The Department of Energy will make employment trend information available and promote co-op work terms. A private-public sector energy skills forum in 2003-2004 will identify solutions to major labour energy sector issues projected for the next five to 10 years. (Energy)

The Department of Energy continues to be part of the Federal-Provincial Labour Market Information Committee to keep abreast of national labour market issues and policy developments. Labour market information is critical for projecting supply and demand trends in particular occupations related to the energy sector.

In November 2003, the Department of Energy sponsored the Nova Scotia Petroleum Skills Forum, bringing together more than 60 key stakeholders from industry and government to discuss issues facing the sector into the next decade.

Approximately 60 post-secondary students benefited from on-the-job offshore work experience with several firms in the industry, through the department's Energy Training Program. As well, Energy invested $500,000 in the Nova Scotia Community College Nautical Institute to purchase a dynamic positioning simulator to train offshore workers, and the University College of Cape Breton and the Nova Scotia Community College, working with ExxonMobil Canada, created world-class facilities to train oil and gas workers. Nova Scotia Energy and Skills Canada-Nova Scotia participated in a series of information sessions to showcase trades and technology careers as a viable choice for high school students.

Higher Education

PRIORITY: STUDENT DEBT REDUCTION

Government will introduce a student debt-reduction program in 2003-2004. (Education)

A new student debt reduction program was introduced in 2003 and further funding has been committed to this program. An information campaign, targeting students and officials at post-secondary institutions was completed and initial applications were received.

PRIORITY: NOVA SCOTIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE GROWTH PLAN

Government will provide capital funding to renovate and expand NSCC and increase enrollments. (Education)

$123 million will be invested in the Nova Scotia Community College between 2003 and 2007 to upgrade existing campuses and to construct a new Metro campus. This will move the College infrastructure toward the national college education benchmark and increase capacity by 2,500 seats.

PRIORITY: UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Government will provide stable and more long term funding for universities, to mitigate tuition increases in 2003-2004. (Education)

Operating funding to universities was almost $6 million higher in 2003-2004, compared to the previous year. On average, university tuition fees in the province rose 6.6 per cent, to an average of $5,557.

The Department of Education and the Office of Economic Development continued to monitor the demand on the Nova Scotia Research and Innovation Trust Fund (NSRITF) for funds to match project funding awarded by the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI). CFI is an independent corporation created by the Government of Canada to fund research infrastructure that strengthens Canadian institutions' ability to conduct world class research and technology development. In 2003-2004, the NSRITF provided $9.6 million to match funding from CFI to Nova Scotia universities and the Nova Scotia Community College for 45 projects.

PRIORITY: HELP FOR POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) and the Collège de l'Acadie will develop a policy to help students with disabilities better access post-secondary learning. (Education)

The number of NSCC students with an individual program plan for persons with disabilities rose from 37 to 46 in 2003-2004 and is projected to reach 60 in 2004-2005. The tracking of eligible students with disabilities will be conducted under the new Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities.

Each campus has assistive technology work-stations available for students with disabilities. The development of a common special needs principles was deferred until 2004-2005.

PRIORITY: ENHANCE FRENCH/ ACADIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Government will complete arrangements to merge Université Sainte-Anne and Collège de l'Acadie. (Education)

The department allocated $500,000, over and above the combined operating grants for the two institutions, to support the merger of Université Sainte-Anne-Collège de l'Acadie. This is part of an agreement between the province and Canadian Heritage.

Education: Measuring Our Performance

SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT INDICATOR PROGRAM (SAIP)

Outcome:
Better educated Nova Scotians.

What does this measure tell us?

SAIP assesses 13- and 16-year-old students in mathematics, reading, science and writing. The data reported below are based on the results of the16-year-old students only because they have had the longest exposure to these programs. SAIP, a national assessment, has five levels of performance and each has a description of student performance. The national standard for 16-year-old students is 3.

Where are we now?

In 2002, writing levels for English and French students were below the national average. The 2002 "writing instrument" varied a great deal from the one used in 1998 and, according to SAIP, one should not compare the 2002 and 1998 results.

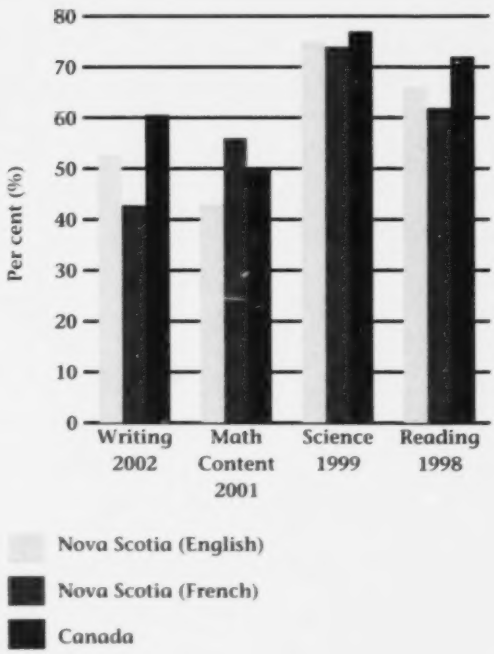
In 2001, 16-year-old English students' math results were below the national average while French students' results were above the national average.

In 1999, students' science results at the provincial level and the national level were fairly close.

In 1998, students' reading results were below the national average.

Nova Scotia SAIP Results

Percentage of 16-Year-Olds at Level 3 or Higher



Source: Nova Scotia Department of Education.

Where do we want to be?

SAIP was not administered because 2003 was designated for the Programme of International Student Assessment. We are awaiting the results of SAIP Science administered in the spring of 2004 and

targeting results to be higher than those in 1999.

It should be noted that SAIP has been discontinued as a national assessment; to be replaced by the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program which is in development. This new assessment will be administered to 15-year-old students and the department will set new targets based on PCAP baseline data

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE

Outcome: Better educated Nova Scotians

What does this measure tell us?

The graduation rate is the percentage of students receiving a high school graduation diploma compared with the number of students in Grade 9 three years earlier.

Education is a key variable in improved employment prospects and higher earnings, and the pursuit of further education depends upon high school graduation.

Where are we now?

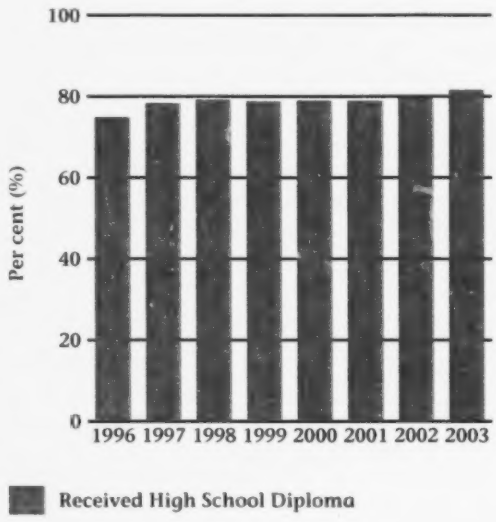
Since graduations occur in June, the most recent results are for the 2002-2003 school year. Graduation increased from 79 per cent to 81.6 per cent between the 2000-2001 and the 2002-2003 school years.

Where do we want to be?

Our target is to have the high school graduation rate to continue to increase.

Grade 12 Graduation Rate

(Compared to the Number of Students in Grade 9 Three Years Earlier)



For the school year ending June 30th.

Source: Nova Scotia Department of Education.

PARTICIPATION IN THE NOVA SCOTIA SCHOOL FOR ADULT LEARNING

Outcome:
Better educated Nova Scotians

What does this measure tell us?

The measure provides data on the number of Nova Scotians participating in literacy and upgrading programs through the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning; an indication of adults involved in lifelong learning. The Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning supports adult education programs that allow Nova Scotians to improve their literacy skills and earn credits toward the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults.

Where are we now?

In 2003-2004, approximately 4,800 Nova Scotians participated in programs supported through the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning.

Where do we want to be?

As the need for life long learning continues to grow, it is expected that more adult Nova Scotians will participate in the program.

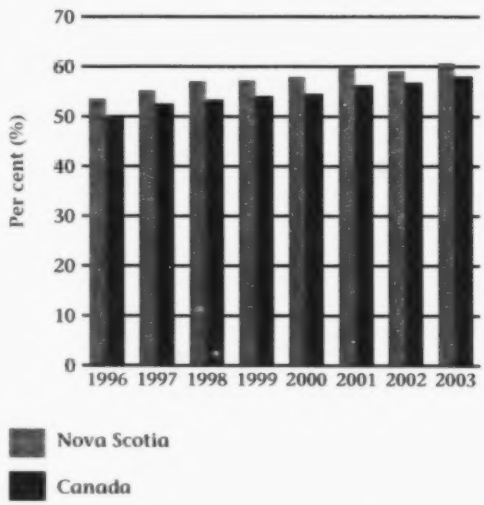
NOVA SCOTIANS WITH POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Outcome:
Better educated Nova Scotians

What does this measure tell us?

This measure shows the percentage of Nova Scotians aged 25–54 who have a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree.

Percentage of Nova Scotians and Canadians (25–54) with Post-Secondary Education



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Historical Review

Where are we now?

The percentage of Nova Scotians aged 25–54 who have a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree rose from 59.1 to 60.7 between 2002 and 2003. This is higher than the national average of 58.1 per cent.

Where do we want to be ?

Our target is to have this percentage continue to increase.

GRADE PRIMARY TO GRADE 12 COMPUTER RATIO

Outcome: A technology-enhanced learning environment

What does this measure tell us?

There are three measures for this item:

- Ratio of total students to total computers
- Ratio of total students to up-to-date computers (PII-266 MHz or better)
- Number of classrooms with three or more current computers

Where are we now?

As of March 31, 2004, there were 4.4 students for every computer.

As of March 31, 2004, there were 5.4 students for every up-to-date computer.

2,856 classrooms had three or more current computers.

Where do we want to be?

Our target for 2005-2006 is a ratio of 5 total students to 1 current computer. Target ratios vary from 8:1 in Grade Primary to Grade 2 to 2.5:1 in Grades 7 to 12. To do this, we need to replace approximately 7,000 older computers per year. Both the IEI and the Technology Recycling Program will help provide the computers.

P-12 Computer Ratio and Number of Classes with Three or More Computers

	2002	2003	2004
Ratio of Total Students to Total Computers	6.2	5.1	4.4
Ratio of Total Students to Current Computers (200MHz or better)	9.3	6.7	5.4
Number of Classrooms with Three or More Current Computers	2088	2111	2856

Source: Nova Scotia Department of Education, March 31 figures.

The Economy

Priorities for 2003–2004

In 2003-2004, Nova Scotia continued building its economy, becoming more prosperous and self-sufficient in the process.

The Government delivered its second consecutive balanced budget and the financial community reacted positively, with major international credit rating agencies upgrading the Province's status.

The Office of Economic Development took the lead in establishing Brand Nova Scotia-an initiative that crosses many departments and government agencies-which will better promote the province on the world market. The end result should be more business investment, more tourism, more immigration, more prosperity for the Province.

During the year, measures were taken to address factors, such as energy, taxation, immigration and diversity, that play a role in building economic capacity and growth.

PRIORITY: COMPETITIVE TAXATION

Lowering taxes and increasing competitiveness is a key component of the Province's plan to encourage new economic growth. To ensure that the benefits of lower taxes are felt as soon as possible, government will make a one-time payment directly to taxpayers in 2003.

The 2003-2004 budget introduced a 10 per cent tax reduction which was scheduled to take effect for the 2004 taxation year. Adjustments, retroactive to January 1, 2004 were made in the 2004-2005 budget; please refer to the Measures section of this report for more details. The one-time Nova Scotia Taxpayer Refund began in June 2003 and final payments are scheduled for early 2005.

Other tax competitive measures successfully implemented in the 2003-2004 budget include an increase in the threshold on which the small business tax rate applies and an extension of the Equity Tax Credit.

PRIORITY: BALANCED/SURPLUS BUDGET

For the second year in a row, the province will bring in a balanced budget in 2003-2004. (Finance, Treasury and Policy Board)

Nova Scotia enjoyed its second consecutive balanced budget in 2003-2004, producing a surplus of $42.6 million, well above the estimated $2.8 million.

PRIORITY: BRAND NOVA SCOTIA INITIATIVE

Brand Nova Scotia, to be implemented in 2003-2004, represents a cluster of communication, marketing and business development functions that share a common goal of growing Nova Scotia's economy. (Economic Development, Tourism, Culture and Heritage)

This objective requires a co-ordinated effort from many government departments, with the Office of Economic Development (OED) playing the lead role. In July 2003, OED re-assembled the Brand Nova Scotia, which took a two-pronged approach to the initiative:

- establishing a Brand Toolkit to include a visual identity strategy, a presentation, a photo/video library and a database. These tools will be used in Nova Scotia awareness campaigns and provided to public/private sector projects to reinforce Brand Nova Scotia;
- a series of targeted marketing activities such as supplier development, an expatriates program and the promotion of local products or services.

Efforts that support Brand Nova Scotia will continue through 2004-2005.

Tourism, Culture and Heritage was part of the Brand Nova Scotia Steering Committee, participated on the NovaScotia.com team and implemented recommendations under the Brand Nova Scotia initiative.

PRIORITY:
DEVELOP A NATURAL GAS DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

Government will be working in 2003-2004 to ensure the early development of a natural gas distribution system that meets the goals fo the Energy Strategy; some communities may have access to natural gas within the next year. (Energy)

In 2003-2004, the Department of Energy co-ordinated talks between Heritage Gas and Natural Resources Canada to encourage residential and small business transition to natural gas. As a result, funding was received from the Gas Market Development Fund and Natural Resources Canada.

In January 2004, Heritage Gas announced that the province's first commercial and residential customers were receiving natural gas.

PRIORITY:
ELECTRICITY MARKET GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

The Committee will deliver its final report in 2003-2004, recommending the terms under which the electricity market in Nova Scotia is restructured. Specific areas of concentration will be opening up the electricity transmission system, electricity sales to the wholesale market, rules governing the construction of new generation facilities, and generation from renewable energy sources. (Energy)

The Minster of Energy released the final report of the Electricity Marketplace Governance Committee on October 23, 2003. On November 28, 2003 the Minister of Energy announced that government had accepted all 89 of the Committee's recommendations and has since been working on an implementation strategy. In March 2004, the Department of Energy retained a consulting firm to help government draft new electricity legislation that support the recommendations.

PRIORITY: PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL LINKAGES

Intergovernmental Affairs will be working in 2003-2004 to expand Nova Scotia's international linkages to support and promote Nova Scotia's interests abroad. Specific efforts will ensure that Nova Scotia's interests are fairly considered in the development of solutions to trans-border irritants, security, and other issues and will support Nova Scotia's trade and investment strategies by keeping Nova Scotia departments and agencies abreast of international ideas, trends, and multilateral obligations. (Intergovernmental Affairs)

Intergovernmental Affairs worked closely with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries to voice legitimate concerns regarding the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) proposed bioterrorism regulations, which could have reduced exports of fresh fish and seafood products to the U.S. The issue was raised with Canada's department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, both in Ottawa and in diplomatic posts in Washington, DC and Boston, and with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Ultimately, the FDA's December 2003 regulations accommodated many of Nova Scotia's concerns.

Intergovernmental Affairs' Trade Policy Unit and Office of Protocol established a procedure with Nova Scotia Business Inc. (NSBI), the Office of Economic Development and the Government of Canada's International Trade Centre to optimize trade and investment opportunities during visits of foreign dignitaries and diplomats.

PRIORITY: BUSINESS EXPANSION AND GROWTH

In 2003-2004, Nova Scotia Business Inc. will provide new and innovative services for Nova Scotia companies to support growth within and outside the province. These include export development services, financial services, and business attraction services. (Nova Scotia Business Inc.)

Nova Scotia Business Inc. (NSBI) helped to expand and grow the Province's economy on several fronts.

Exporting:

In 2003-2004, Nova Scotia saw its export development efforts payoff. NSBI helped Nova Scotian businesses identify export opportunities and expand markets for their products and services. Some 2003-2004 results include:

- Through the Export Prospector and Prospector Plus programs, 290 companies exported goods and services worth more than $32 million

to markets such as Washington and New York; seven companies had immediate sales of $150,000 and anticipated another $450,000 worth of sales; eight companies generated immediate sales worth $80,714 and anticipated another $1.8-million to clients in South Carolina and Boston.

- NSBI helped IT, energy, biotechnology, and natural resources companies to glean valuable business information from trade shows, conferences, and other business encounters through its expert-led Competitive Intelligence sessions. The Crown corporation also launched RxPort, a referral tool that connects companies across the province with a Trade Team Nova Scotia partner who can meet their trade-related needs.
- As Nova Scotia's representative for the Pan-Atlantic International Business Development Agreement (IBDA), NSBI supported 30 export-related projects, falling into one of four categories: planning and research, market information and intelligence, training and international business development activities.

Financial Services:

NSBI authorized loans of $10.3 million to help 16 companies upgrade, modernize and expand to increase their competitiveness. For example, an $82,500 investment allowed Antigonish County's River's Bend Wood Products to increase its hardwood-flooring production and enter new markets in Western Canada.

As the Province's primary contact for Nova Scotia's growth-oriented businesses, NSBI built on its relationships with financial insti-tutions, term lenders, venture capitalists, public institutions and others investment sources to leverage an additional $22 million from public and private investors, exceeding its investment targets in the process. As well, through the Capital Ideas Roadshow, NSBI continued to inform businesses across Nova Scotia about the various forms of financing options that are available.

Business Attraction:

Nova Scotia has a lot to offer businesses looking for a place to invest and grow: a skilled, educated workforce; world-class R&D facilities; strong technological infrastructure; competitive business costs; and a great life-style. NSBI strategically targeted more than 360 companies and business organizations, primarily in key US markets.

During 2003-2004, 13 companies set up or re-invested in operations in Nova Scotia. Through the Province's payroll rebate commitments, the 13 firms paid $22.5 million less in taxes and hired more than 2,300 full-time staff. The Province collected almost $38 million in direct provincial personal taxes, representing an estimated return on investment of $15.4 million.

NSBI focused on diversifying the province's traditional industries, targeting growth businesses such as the life sciences, information technolgy, manufacturing and energy sectors. Examples include Creditek, a financial services world leader, which chose Halifax over nine other global sites as the home to its operations centre. Up to 240 jobs will result. EPC Industries Limited (Poly Cello), the leading manufacturer of polyethylene products, expanded its operations in Amherst. The expansion will allow the company to increase exports to the US, boost its market share and hire up to 70 people.

PRIORITY: INNOVATIVE NOVA SCOTIA POLICY

The government will launch Innovative Nova Scotia to stimulate knowledge-based innovation in the province. (Office of Economic Development)

In June 2003, the Innovative Nova Scotia policy was released and the Premier's Advisory Council on Innovation was launched. Chaired by Dr. Kelvin Ogilvie, the council has a mandate to "provide independent advice and direction to Government to help maximize the potential economic and social benefits enhanced innovation and technology offers to Nova Scotians". Efforts to promote an innovative Nova Scotia are further supported by the Canada-Nova Scotia Innovation Team/Innovation Working Group process. This group, co-chaired by the Office of Economic Development and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, provides a mechanism to improve public sector co-ordination and collaboration on innovation issues and activities.

PRIORITY: BUILDING REGIONAL CAPACITY

The provincial government will work with federal and provincial governments and community-based agencies to expand the capacity of communities to identify and meet development challenges. (Office of Economic Development)

Nova Scotia continues to work with the federal and municipal levels of government and community-based agencies to expand communities' capacity to address development challenges.

Some accomplishments include:

- developing a Community Development Policy;
- working with Team Guysborough to diversify Canso's economy;
- launching the Credit Union Loan Guarantee Program to fill a gap in small business financing; and
- expanding the Canada-Nova Scotia Business Service Centre rural network

to new sites in Shelburne and Kespuwick Park (Cornwallis).

As well, there was further development of the Community Access Program (C@P), a federal/provincial initiative that provides affordable Internet access to Canadian communities. The next C@P agreement will focus on specific target groups such as seniors, francophones, immigrants and persons with disabilities.

PRIORITY: IMPLEMENT THE 2003 TOURISM PLAN

Government will work with the Nova Scotia Tourism Partnership Council to implement the vision of 100 per cent revenue growth over the next decade. (Tourism, Culture and Heritage)

In conjunction with the Tourism Partnership Council and industry, the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage implemented the 2003 Tourism Plan. Advertising stemming from the Tourism Plan generated $136 million worth of tourism business in the province. In 2003, tourism receipts reached $1.3 billion and provided 33,400 direct and indirect jobs in Nova Scotia.

Strong partnerships between government and the tourism industry resulted in a collaborative approach that focussed on results. The department supported a long term Tourism Strategy and Vision to double tourism revenues by 2012.

PRIORITY: PROMOTE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

Priorities for 2003-2004 include marketing initiatives and support for culture businesses, a growth program for book publishers promoting out-of-province sales and recognition for Nova Scotia stories and authors, market development for the craft sector, and cultural trade missions. (Tourism, Culture and Heritage)

The Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage supported market development initiatives in partnership with cultural industry sub sectors. The department focussed on projects that promote Nova Scotia's music, publishing, theatre, crafts and visual arts sectors. Government investments of $454,577 leveraged industry investments of $3,469,193.

PRIORITY: PREPARING FOR ACADIAN CELEBRATIONS

Nova Scotia will have a series of activities, including the Congrès mondial acadien, in 2004. The government will help stakeholders to prepare for the events. (Tourism, Culture and Heritage)

The Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage invested $750,000 to support the Acadian Celebrations and the Congrès mondial acadien in 2004. In 2003, a new tourism advertising and promotional campaign was launched in the key markets of Atlantic Canada and Québec incorporated an Acadian visual identity, images and copy. Acadian cultural experiences and tourism products such as family reunions and historical re-enactments were highlighted in marketing campaigns that encouraged people to visit Nova Scotia.

PRIORITY: AGRICULTURAL RISK MANAGEMENT

In 2003-2004, government will work to implement the Agriculture Policy Framework Agreement to strengthen the industry's capacity to manage and reduce its risks. (Agriculture and Fisheries)

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE or "Mad Cow" disease) was a significant threat to our agriculture sector in 2003. The primary loss resulted when other nations – primarily the US – closed their borders to Canadian meat producers. Following the provincial BSE Task Force Report, an additional $3.5 million was allocated to mitigate BSE-related income loss through a variety of government programs. As well, the department represented farmers at meetings in the US with the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, American Department of Agriculture officials, congressional staff and American industry representatives.

In September 2003, the province launched the Production Insurance Program (formerly Crop Insurance), under the Canada-Nova Scotia Implementation Agreement, and invested $2.5 million over two fiscal years to help the farming industry move to the new risk management program. The program should be fully in place in 2006. The program makes more commodities

eligible for coverage, adds greater flexibility to meet the needs of producers and sets lower premiums. On average, producer premiums are 20 per cent lower.

The Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization Program, also launched in 2003, protects farmers' income by combining income stabilization and disaster protection. This program replaces the former Net Income Stabilization Account program.

PRIORITY:
AIR INFRASTRUCTURE

The federal and Nova Scotia governments have pledged $1.4 million to expand commercial opportunities at Halifax International Airport, to attract new tenants and create employment. (Transportation and Public Works)

Twelve commercial lots were developed at the Halifax International Airport. The Province invested $500,000 toward an airside lot subdivision to support the development of the airport and local exporters.

PRIORITY:
SUPPORT CAPE BRETON RAILWAY INFRASTRUCTURE

The government of Nova Scotia and our federal counterparts have brokered deals to increase cargo traffic on the rail line and to fund infrastructure and maintenance. (Office of Economic Development, Transportation and Public Works)

Early in 2003, with provincial and federal funding support, the Cape Breton & Central Nova Scotia Railway Ltd. agreed to operate the St. Peter's Junction to Sydney portion of the line until at least December 31, 2004. The Province helped to finds a business solution that allowed for continued rail service in Cape Breton and will continue to develop options to retain the rail service.

PRIORITY:
PROMOTE IMMIGRATION

The government will work with Citizenship and Immigration Canada to define roles and responsibilities to promote immigrant settlement in the province. As well, we will continue our Provincial Nominee Program. (Education, Office of Economic Development)

The Office of Economic Development, Intergovernmental Affairs, Treasury and Policy Board and the Department of Tourism, Culture, and Heritage worked together on a comprehensive immigration strategy. Informal consultations with Citizenship and Immigration Canada were held in spring 2004.

The Office of Economic Development conducted significant immigration marketing efforts during the year, with 57 nomination certificates issued to fill critical skill shortages for employers and contributing to the overall viability of the Nova Scotia's business climate.

The Economy: Measuring Our Performance

BALANCED/SURPLUS BUDGET

Outcome:
Improved economic climate

What does this measure tell us?

A key priority of government is to put and keep Nova Scotia's finances in order. A measure of the government's commitment to this priority is its achievement of fiscal targets.

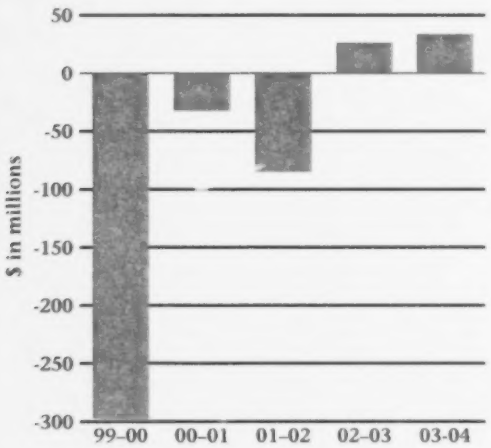
Where are we now?

Nova Scotia enjoyed its second consecutive balanced budget in 2003-2004; producing a surplus of $42.6 million, well above the estimated $2.8 million.

Where do we want to be?

The government had a budget surplus in 2003-2004 and intends to balance its 2004-2005 budget.

Provincial Surplus (Deficit) 1999–2004



(Deficit) surplus before provision for Unusual Items: Sysco (1999–2000); Gain on sale of NSRL (2000–01).

Source: Nova Scotia Department of Finance.

PROVINCIAL NET DIRECT DEBT (NDD) AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP

Outcome: Improved economic climate

What does this measure tell us?

Provincial debt to gross domestic product (GDP) is a measure of the Province's sustainability; the higher the ratio, the heavier the debt burden for Nova Scotians. The measure is one that is commonly used by governments, rating agencies and the media.

Due to accounting changes and corrections that were made throughout the year, the NDD is often restated in the year-end financial statements of the Province, resulting in changes to the NDD/GDP ratio. (See Public Accounts, Volume1 – Financial Statements, 2003-2004)

Where are we now?

As of March 31, 2004, the Province's 2003-2004 NDD/GDP ratio decreased to 42.8 per cent. This represents a decrease from the restated ratio for 2002-2003 of 45.1 per cent.

Where do we want to be?

Our target is to reduce Nova Scotia's NDD/GDP ratio with the longer-term goal to have the Province's ratio more in line with the national average, 23.8 per cent.

CORPORATE INCOME AND CAPITAL TAX BURDEN

Outcome: Improved economic/business climate

What does this measure tell us?

Corporate income and capital tax rates measure the overall tax rate applied to Nova Scotia business. It is the most visible form of taxation for businesses looking to invest in Nova Scotia. This measure tells us the general tax rates applied to business income and to business capital; two major elements of business investment. By monitoring these rates, we can compare them to rates in other jurisdictions to ensure that the Province remains competitive.

Where are we now?

The table provides an overview of where Nova Scotia is today in comparison with other Atlantic Provinces. Although the small business rate has not changed in Nova Scotia, the threshold on which that rate applies has changed to match recent increases announced by the Government of Canada. These rates do not take into account tax credit programs that exist in Nova Scotia or the other provinces:

Where do we want to be?

We want to ensure that Nova Scotia's business tax rates remain competitive with other provinces while maintaining fiscal responsibility. Continued balanced budgets will help the Province to reduce taxation in the future.

Atlantic Canada Business Tax Rates, 2004

	Nova Scotia	New Brunswick	PEI	NFLD & Labrador
General Income Tax	16%	13%	16%	14%
Small Business Income Tax	5%	3%	7.5%	5%
Large Corporations Tax	0.3%	0.3%	NIL	NIL

Source: Nova Scotia Department of Finance.

MARGINAL EFFECTIVE PERSONAL TAX RATES

Outcome:
Improved economic climate

What does this measure tell us?

The measure looks at the marginal effective tax rates in four personal income ranges, commonly referred to as low, middle and high brackets, and either a high-income surtax or a fourth bracket. It tells us how much tax an individual can expect to pay on the next dollar of taxable income earned and allows us to compare this to other provinces.

As a result of the move to tax on net income, provinces can set individual income brackets, so a nationwide standard does not exist. Nova Scotia uses the terms Low, Middle, High and High Plus to distinguish the brackets.

Generally, the Low bracket is up to about $30,000, the Middle bracket to about $60,000 and the High bracket is over $60,000. High Plus refers to the point at which a high income surtax starts (in Nova Scotia's case, $10,000 basic tax payable) or where an additional bracket begins (in New Brunswick's case, $100,000 of income).

Marginal Effective Tax Rates in Atlantic Canada, 2004

	Nova Scotia		New Brunswick	PEI	NFLD & Labrador
	2003-2004 Budget**	2004-2005 Budget**			
Low	8.79	8.79	9.68%	9.8%	10.57%
Middle	13.58	14.95	14.82%	13.8%	16.16%
High	15.17	16.67	16.52%	18.37%	18.02%
High Plus*	0	19.25	17.84%	18.37%	19.64%

Source: Nova Scotia Department of Finance.

** The marginal effective tax rate includes the effect of surtaxes.*

*** In the 2004-2005 budget, the province adjusted the tax rates retroactive to January 1, 2004. Although the adjustments were announced after the end of the 2003-2004 reporting period they did affect taxes in the reporting period. Despite the adjustments, approximately 96 per cent of Nova Scotians paid lower income taxes in 2003-2004 than in the previous year.*

Where are we now?

The table shows the marginal effective rates in Atlantic Canada.

In the 2003-2004 budget, the Province announced a one-time $155 Nova Scotia Taxpayer Refund for Nova Scotians who paid provincial income tax. This refund cannot be reflected in the above rates but it represents an estimated $78-million reduction in personal income tax burden for Nova Scotians.

Where do we want to be?

Nova Scotia continues to remain true to its commitment-to remain competitive with other provinces-particularly in Atlantic Canada.

CREDIT RATING BY MAJOR RATING AGENCIES

Outcome:
Improved economic climate

What does this measure tell us?

Rating agencies assign a credit rating for the Province, based on their evaluation of our ability to repay money we borrow plus interest. This credit rating affects the Province's debt servicing costs.

Where are we now?

In 2003-2004, the Dominion Bond Rating Service upgraded the Province of Nova Scotia's long-term debt rating from BBB(high) to A(low). Standard & Poor's also raised the Province's rating outlook from A-stable to A-positive.

Where do we want to be?

Our 2004-2005 target has been achieved; our credit ratings have improved. The province will continue to monitor and improve its rating by producing balanced budgets.

BUSINESS CLIMATE INDEX

Outcome:
Competitive business climate

What does this measure tell us?

Data compiled for the index helps pinpoint areas where Nova Scotia needs to improve. Each year action plans are developed to strengthen weaker areas.

Where are we now?

The Business Climate Index demonstrates that Nova Scotia has the most competitive business climate in Atlantic Canada, and the fourth best in all of Canada for the second year in a row.

Where do we want to be?

Nova Scotia's challenge is to remain the best business climate in Atlantic Canada, improve our national ranking and close the gap separating the province from the leaders in the area.

WORKING TIME LOST DUE TO STRIKES AND LOCK-OUTS

Outcome:
Stable business climate

What Does The Measure Tell Us?

This measure, comparing the percentage of time lost to labour actions to the national average, is an indicator of labour stability, an important factor for economic development. Comparison with national rates helps government monitor trends, set targets and determine priorities.

Where are we now?

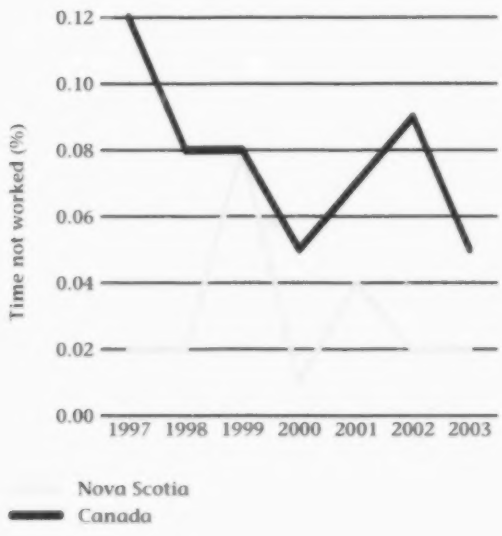
In recent years, Nova Scotia has shown a high degree of labour stability. Time loss in the economy has been consistently at or below the national average. In 2003, the percentage of working time lost due to strikes and lockouts was 0.02 per cent for Nova Scotia and 0.05 per cent nationally.

Where do we want to be?

Our ongoing target through to 2004-2005 is to remain at or below the national average for percentage of work time lost. This will be accomplished through effective use of the conciliation and mediation processes.

Work Stoppages, 1997–2003

(Time not worked as a percentage of working time)



Sources: Human Resource Development Canada, Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Labour

OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION WELLS DRILLED

Outcome: Economic growth

What does this measure tell us?

This is a measure of the average number of oil and gas exploration wells drilled in Nova Scotia's offshore over a five-year period. Seismic exploration is a preliminary step in finding oil and gas reserves, occurring before exploration and development drilling. Exploration wells are drilled to discover oil and gas resources; development wells are drilled to recover known resources. New reserves can lead to new development projects, promoting the offshore area for further exploration and development activities.

Where are we now?

In 2003-2004, there were seven seismic explorations in Nova Scotia's offshore, a considerable increase from 2002. Five exploration wells were started in 2003. Of these, two (Margaree and MarCoh) encountered gas finds. A third, Mariner, encountered gas but was subsequently abandoned.

To date, there have been two exploration wells drilled (Cree and Crimson) and there are 4 seismic programs scheduled for 2004.

The five exploration drilled in 2003-2004 are above the Department's baseline average, yet the Department of Energy would have liked to see more exploration wells drilled to increase the chances of additional oil and gas resource discoveries. Still, drilling the five exploration wells yielded significant knowledge about our offshore geological structures area that will help companies to be more successful in future exploration drilling.

Where do we want to be?

The department would like to see exploration levels maintained or increased.

PUBLIC/PRIVATE CAPITAL INVESTMENT

Outcome: Infrastructure that supports economic growth

What does this measure tell us?

This is a measure of the value of capital expenditures per person for new construction and machinery and equipment. Information on capital spending provides an indication of infrastructure capacity and market conditions in the economy.

Where are we now?

In 2003, investment per person in Nova Scotia was $5,808 (85 per cent of the national average).

Where do we want to be?

Our goal is to increase investment per capita over time to 100 per cent of the national average by 2004-2005.

INTERNATIONAL ROUGHNESS INDEX

Outcome: Infrastructure that Supports Economic Growth

The condition of our highway system plays a key supporting role in the development of the provincial economy and is measured using a International Roughness Index (IRI). The IRI is a new, advanced measure; internationally accepted and comparable across jurisdictions. (Note: This replaces the previous measure, riding comfort index of 100-series highways.)

What does the measure tell us?

IRI is measured on a scale of 0 to 5, where 0 is the smoothest and 5 is unacceptable. How the 100-series highways score reflects the highway system's contribution to increasing economic development in the province. Good roads enable industry to access new resources, the transport of raw materials and finished goods, and provide mobility for workers and consumers to reach the work place and market place. An IRI value of 1.6 or below for the 100-series highways is good, according to the National IRI Survey – 2001.

Where are we now?

The riding comfort on our 100-series highways has improved. In 2003, it was 1.45, compared to the baseline rating data from 2002: 1.48.

Where do we want to be?

The Department of Transportation and Public Works will strive to maintain the level of riding comfort on 100-series highways. To achieve this, the Department of Transportation and Public Works (TPW) has implemented End Product Specifications, whereby, paving contractors are made responsible for product quality on all suitable paving contracts of 8,000 tons of asphalt or more; and is maintaining our surface treatment program to protect asphalt surfaces.

EMPLOYMENT RATE

Outcome:
Improved economic activity

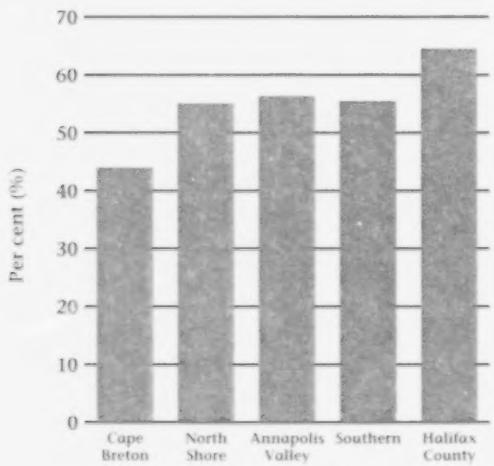
What does this measure tell us?

The employment rate measures the number of Nova Scotians, 15 years and older, working in full-time and part-time jobs. It fluctuates throughout the year on a fairly predictable seasonal basis, so an average figure is the best indicator of performance over time.

Where are we now?

Nova Scotia's employment rate rose from 52.6 per cent in 1997 to 57.3 per cent in 2003. The overall rate for Canada was 59.0 per cent in 1997 and 62.4 per cent in 2003.

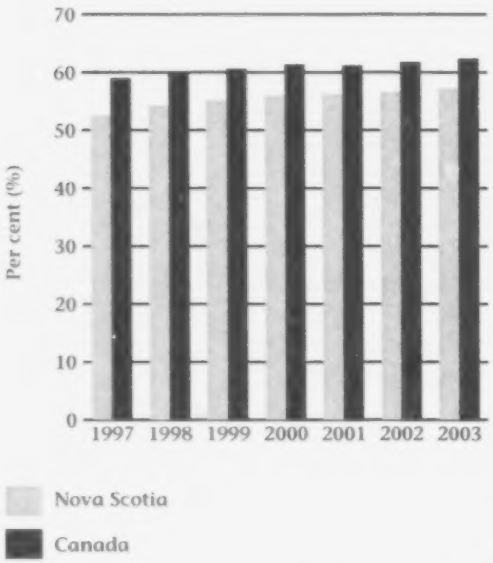
Employment by Region, 2003



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Historical Review 2003.

Employment Rate

Nova Scotia and Canada



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Historical Review 2003.

Employment rates vary within the province in 2003. The Halifax region, at 64.6 per cent, continued to perform above the provincial and national employment rates; in Cape Breton region, the rate was 44.0 per cent in 2003.

Where do we want to be?

Our aim is to continuously monitor employment rates and implement meaningful strategies that, over time, will help to close the existing gaps.

Families and Communities

Priorities for 2003–2004

Self-Sufficient Families and Children

In 2003-2004, the Government of Nova Scotia continued its efforts to improve life in our province. Families – especially children – are an integral part of Nova Scotia. Families are the root of our social fabric and children are the future of our province.

We made inroads on affordable housing, taking steps to ensure that low and middle income earners had sufficient shelter. Our programs helped them repair existing homes or built new ones.

As well, we invested in making families stronger and more self-sufficient, through improvements to early childhood development programs and expanded support to parents. More people were working in the province, reducing dependence on income assistance programs and legislation was amended to improve benefits for family caregivers.

Nova Scotia became more inclusive, following improvements to programs that assist people with disabilities and caregivers, and First Nations.

On the justice and public safety front, consultations concluded on policing services and new legislation is anticipated in the fall and there was increased support for victims of domestic violence. Nova Scotia prepared to implement the Youth Criminal Justice Act and access to the courts was improved following construction and renovation initiatives across the province.

Across Nova Scotia, roads are safer and highway-related casualties are declining.

PRIORITY: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Construction of affordable housing projects will continue in 2003-2004 under a $37 million cost-sharing program with the federal government.
(Community Services)

In November 2003, under the Canada-Nova Scotia Renovation Programs Agreement, changes were made to the Residential Repair Assistance Program. These included an increase in the maximum assistance levels from $12,000 to $16,000 and the elimination of the

forgivable loan portion of the program. The increase in assistance helped to reduce the impact of inflation on the cost of building materials and labour.

In December 2003, the Department of Community Services and the Creighton-Gerrish Development Corporation began building semi-detached dwellings in Halifax, funded under the new Home Ownership Program.

In March 2004, the department issued a request for proposals under a New Rental Program to make more affordable housing available for low to moderate income people in the Annapolis Valley and South Shore regions. The department also committed $1 million to help homeowners make extensive repairs to their homes in 2003-2004.

Community Services also committed $1 million to the new Home Preservation Program that helped 26 low to medium income homeowners make extensive repairs to their homes. The department expects additional funding in 2004-2005 will help more eligible homeowners to repair their homes.

PRIORITY: EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

The province will continue its five-year Early Childhood Development Initiative, cost-shared with the Government of Canada. The program adds child care spaces, recruits and retains child care workers, improves home visit programs, and benefits children and their families in several other ways.
(Community Services, Health)

To date, more than $36 million has been invested to improve services designed to help Nova Scotia's children fulfil their potential. The Province's approach is to strengthen and expand a broad array of child and family programs and services, including child care subsidies, parent education and support, home visiting services, volunteer programs, initiatives for children with special needs, early language development and enhanced training for child care practitioners.

Highlights of 2003-2004 activities include:

Stabilize and enhance child care

- $3.8 million for the Child Care Stabilization Grant Program, to increase the training of child care professionals. In 2003-2004, 87 per cent of child care workers were trained, up from 78 per cent in 2002.

- More that 400 child care professionals were trained to better support special needs children.
- $724,000 worth of part-day child care material and resource grants were used to promote increased physical activity.
- 22 new child care centres were selected for the Partnership for Inclusion Program, to increase the quality of child care services for children with special needs.

Enhance the Healthy Beginnings home visiting program

- In 2003-2004, District Health Authorities hired more public health nurses and lay persons to work with the nurses in communities throughout the province. They will provide home visits to families who would benefit from additional contact, until the child is three years of age.

Provide parenting education and support

- The Department of Community Services wrote best practice guidelines, for parent education and child care information and support, for roll-out in 2004-2005.

Implement required infrastructure to create a system of early childhood development services at the local level

- Teams were established in two of the department's four program service delivery regions and support staff have been hired in each region. In 2004-2005, the infrastructure supports should be in place in the two remaining regions, Northern and Western.

PRIORITY: CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY

On August, 1, 2001, the Department of Community Services introduced the most significant change to Nova Scotia's welfare system in 30 years. In 2003-2004, the government will evaluate the changes introduced under the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program. (Community Services)

In 2003-2004, the Department of Community Services completed an evaluation framework for the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program, and identified Employment Support Services as the first stage of the evaluation. This evaluation will help the department to ensure that an appropriate mix of services is available to help clients become more employable and self-sufficient.

During the 2003-2004 year, the Income Assistance caseload continued to decline, ending the year with just under 33,000 cases. Many of the remaining clients have multiple barriers to employment, which will make further progress difficult to achieve.

PRIORITY: LEAVE FOR PALLIATIVE/COMPASSIONATE CARE

Under the Labour Standards Code, the government will protect individuals who take leave to provide compassionate or palliative care, for the period that they collect Employment Insurance benefits plus an additional two-week EI waiting period. (Environment and Labour)

Government enacted changes to the Labour Standards Code that enable employees to take up to eight weeks leave from work to provide care for a critically ill family member.

Inclusive Communities

PRIORITY: SUPPORTING ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES

Community Services will work with Nova Scotians and other departments to develop an accessible, responsive and sustainable support system across Nova Scotia. A review of all aspects of the Community Supports for Adults Program-including access, assessment, licensing and legislation-that began in 2002 will continue. (Community Services)

During 2003-2004 the Department completed an inter-jurisdictional review of residential programs and services for people with disabilities. A discussion paper, Renewing the Community Supports for Adults Program, was released in March, 2004. The paper set out a number of concepts and options for improving services for adults with disabilities. Responses will be analyzed during 2004-2005 determine the scope and type of services Nova Scotians want to see in a renewed Community Supports for Adults Program.

PRIORITY: SUPPORT FOR CAREGIVERS

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women will deliver the results and recommendations of its research on the impact of caregiving on women's health and economic status. As well, in 2003-2004, the Council will launch a survey of how a caregiver's health status is affected by combinations of paid work and unpaid caregiving. (Advisory Council on the Status of Women).

In 2003-2004, the program accomplished several goals. Researchers prepared two papers, *Taking its Toll: Implications of Paid and Unpaid Work Responsibilities for Women's Well-being* and *Total Packages of Work: Why Do Women in Atlantic Canada Report More Hours?*

The program consulted with some members of diverse communities to explore how it could best share its *Caregiver Resilience and the Quest for Balance* report with the communities. *Caregiver Portraits*, 14 in-depth studies of diverse caregiving households, was completed. A study of *Policy Options to Support Dependent Care: The Tax/Transfer System*, which adds a fiscal dimension to the exploration of caregiving issues, was completed and will be shared with Canada's Status of Women ministers in 2004-2005.

As well, the Council and the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health marked four years of partnership on researching the interplay between women's health and well-being and their paid and unpaid work, including unpaid caregiving. The research should be completed in the coming year.

PRIORITY: SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

The government of Nova Scotia will continue negotiating a Framework Agreement with the Mi'kmaq and the Government of Canada, establishing a process for treaty negotiations. Also, in partnership with the Mi'kmaq, the Province will continue to support the resolution of priority issues through the Tripartite Forum and in collaboration with communities. (Office of Aboriginal Affairs, Finance, Justice, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, Tourism, Culture and Heritage)

Some key accomplishments include the signing of a Memorandum of Principles between the Province and the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq to develop a site management plan for the Debert Protected Site. The Province worked in partnership with the Mi'kmaq to steer the Mi'kmawey Debert initiative forward and feasibility study work is ongoing.

The Tripartite Forum, a key mechanism for partnership on aboriginal issues, has a administrative secretariat in place. Each working committee is dedicated towards the advancement of their workplan, including efforts in health, education, social issues and economic development.

The Mi'kmaq Legal Support Network continues to provide court worker services to Aboriginal people involved with the legal system and in 2004, the Customary Law Office was added to its suite of services. The Office of Aboriginal Affairs is a major contributor to the Mi'kmaq Legal Support Network and sits on its Advisory Board along with the Department of Justice.

Aboriginal Affairs and the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage worked closely with the Mi'kmaq to preserve and celebrate Mi'kmaq heritage and culture through events such as Treaty Day and the activities of the Tripartite Forum Culture and Heritage committee.

Working with the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, the Department of Finance and the Mi'kmaq, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations implemented point of sale tax exemption systems for on-reserve service stations, first on the Eskasoni Reserve and at 13 other on-reserve service stations by the end of the year. The system is linked to the Nova Scotia

Driver's Licence and is triggered by swiping the licence at the point of sale. On a related matter, qualifying First Nations and the Province have successfully concluded negotiations to resolve a related $20-million past years' fuel tax liability.

During 2003-2004, more than $32 million in gaming revenue was shared with First Nation governments through a series of gaming agreements. During the year, new agreements were negotiated with six First Nations.

Safe Secure Communities

PRIORITY: ENHANCED POLICING

Government will continue to develop a framework for the delivery of adequate and effective policing services by introducing a new Police Act, and co-ordinating training and professional development of those responsible for police governance. (Justice)

The government continued consultations with stakeholders to ensure a new Police Act and Regulations will reflect current policing practices and standards, and strengthen the current police governance model. Consultations will continue in 2004-2005 with the objective of tabling a new Act in the fall of 2004.

Consultations and needs analysis were undertaken by the government with the Nova Scotia Association of Police Boards, to identify the training needed to enhance their police governance skills and abilities. The Justice Learning Centre was engaged to co-ordinate the training requirements, and work will continue on this project in 2004-2005.

PRIORITY: MANAGING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Government will work with police and others to manage domestic violence cases and provide training for justice personnel in keeping with the Russell Report. (Justice)

Government continued its work to improve the response to victims of family violence and the work undertaken in 2002-2003 related to the Russell Report.

The High-Risk Domestic Violence Protocol developed by the Department of Justice and the Public Prosecution Service was adopted by the Justice and Community Services departments.

The Domestic Violence Case Co-ordinator Program was implemented provincewide. The program helps police assess ongoing risks and promotes co-ordination of high-risk cases of domestic violence.

The Justice Learning Centre, in collaboration with the Department of Justice, developed and delivered training regarding domestic violence and High-Risk Protocol for Domestic Violence Educators, Transition House Association of Nova Scotia members and Police Domestic Case Co-ordinators.

PRIORITY: IMPROVING ACCESS TO THE COURT SYSTEM

Government continues to improve access to the justice system and reduce the backlog of cases. In addition, a new $9 million courthouse is being built in Port Hawkesbury and improvements are being made to facilities across the province. (Justice)

In 2003-2004, the Court Services Division continued to improve Supreme Court (Family Division) case processing by reorganizing intake procedures and assigning cases to the Supreme Court (General Division) to clear the backlog. Court Services also examined expanding the role of conciliators in the Family Division, to give more people an opportunity to resolve their dispute without going to court.

As well, significant innovations continued in the development of a new criminal case management system, a courtroom scheduling package, and the exploration of Internet-based forms.

A study of litigants in the Nova Scotia courts resulted in new and improved information brochures, and the hiring of a project manager to review and implement the report's recommendations.

Construction began on the new Port Hawkesbury Justice Centre, a site selection committee reviewed possible locations for a new Lunenburg County courthouse and improvements were made to other facilities in the province.

PRIORITY: IMPROVING CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Government is working to ensure the safety and security of correctional facilities throughout the province. As well, a new $8.8 million institution will be built in Yarmouth. (Justice)

On March 1, 2004, the Province opened its newest correctional facility, a 38-unit complex in Yarmouth, that emphasizes the government's commitment to public safety.

PRIORITY: LEGAL AID

Since 1996, the province has increased funding for legal aid by $2.2 million while federal contributions continue to decrease. In 2003-2004, the province's total legal aid contribution will be $12.6 million. (Justice)

The Province contributed $12.6 million to the Nova Scotia Legal Aid to ensure the current needs of the program were met. In addition, a legal aid funding extension agreement – to March 31, 2006 – was reached with the Government of Canada. Nova Scotia will continue to urge the federal government to increase its legal aid funding.

PRIORITY: YOUTH CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT

Canada's Youth Criminal Justice Act came into force on April 1, 2003, it will require the close collaboration of a number of departments. (Justice, Public Prosecution Service, Office of Health Promotion, Health)

The impact of the Youth Criminal Justice Act (YCJA) is clearly evident. In March 2003, the daily average number of youth remanded/sentenced was 119; in March 2004, it was 64.

In 2003-2004, the Department of Justice continued to chair the YCJA Steering Committee which focussed on implementation issues from a multi-sectoral perspective. The committee includes police, Public Prosecution Service, Court Services, Legal Aid and Correctional Services representatives.

Government also used existing partnerships to explore implementation issues through the provincial Child and Youth Action Committee (CAYAC). Made up of representatives from the Department of Justice, Department of Education and the Youth Secretariat, Department of Community Services, the Department of Health and the Office of Health Promotion-CAYAC is a focal point for cross-jurisdictional and inter-departmental initiatives, and evaluating outcomes for children and youth.

PRIORITY: HIGHWAY SAFETY

Government is taking steps to improve safety on our highways, including a partnership between the Provincial Police Service and the province's Motor Vehicle Compliance Officers, initiatives to improve driver behaviour and vehicle safety, measures to reduce impaired driving and encourage helmet use. (Justice, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations)

Government will invest in improved highway infrastructure to expand the province's 100-series highways. We will also begin a five-year steel-truss bridge replacement program, building four to six structures in 2003-2004. *(Transportation and Public Works)*

The government entered into an agreement with the RCMP that will result in closer working ties for joint roadside commercial vehicle safety checks and shared training, increased security for vehicle compliance officers and expanded enforcement of commercial vehicles.

In January 2004, the Road Safety Advisory Committee reactivated the Alcohol and Drug Countermeasures and Traffic Enforcement Sub-Committee, which confirmed its five road safety initiatives:

- researching passive alcohol sensors;
- researching random vehicle-stop legislation;
- implementing year-round roadside checkpoints;
- reviewing the Drug-Impairment Driving Consultation Document;
- reviewing the Criminal Code Blood Alcohol Content for drinking and driving offences.

The sub-committee will recommend legislative amendments to enhance the existing case law, to further support random vehicle stops. The sub-committee also recommended year-round vehicle checkpoints that focus on increasing seatbelt use and pedestrian, motorcycle and bicycle safety, while reducing speeding and impaired driving.

During 2003-2004, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations (SNSMR) continued to study the implications of requiring ignition-interlock devices after a driver's license was reinstated following a conviction for an alcohol-related offence. Additional research was conducted regarding regulations passed in 2000 to implement vehicle-impoundment legislation. As well, SNSMR completed the technology and business requirement phases of its proposed Collision Management System.

Detailed design work continued throughout 2003-2004 to expand and upgrade the Province's 100-series highways. An environmental screening study for Highway 101, between St. Croix and Avonport was started, and is expected to be presented in the fall of 2004. The department also held a public consultation on the Ben Jackson Rd. intersection replacement, Avonport View Park, and Avonport interchange modifications. A community impact and route evaluation study of Highway 104 between New Glasgow and Sutherlands River was started in August 2003, to be completed in 2004-2005. Planning and design work is ongoing.

A bridge replacement priority list was announced in June 2003. Work was completed on the Luther McNutt, Black Brook (Pictou County), Asylum and Canal bridges. Work on Cape Breton's Black Brook bridge and other structures in the province continues.

PRIORITY: PUBLIC SECURITY AND SAFETY

The government continues to improve public security and safety by helping municipal, provincial and private sector emergency managers establish plans, processes and training to provide a co-ordinated response during a state of emergency. The Emergency Measures Organization will receive additional resources to address potential terrorism threats. Government is also taking steps to improve the speed and efficiency of the 9-1-1 emergency system. (Emergency Measures)

In 2003-2004, the province's emergency preparedness was tested by spring flooding, Hurricane Juan and winter blizzards. In all cases, emergency teams proved up to the challenge but provincial assistance did not end with the passing of the storm. As of March 31, 2004, approximately $60 million had been provided to help Nova Scotians recover from uninsured damages.

These three events put severe strain on the Emergency Measures Organization's resources, limiting their progress on some of the activities they had included in their business plan.

For example, the recruitment of a critical infrastructure planner was delayed until late in 2003-2004. Research is now underway to develop a plan to identify and protect key infrastructure from terrorist attack or natural disasters. This work will continue into 2004-2005.

In 2003-2004, Nova Scotia's 9-1-1 service handled more than 185,000 calls. All benchmarks for prompt service, client satisfaction and reducing inappropriate use of the system were met or exceeded. To increase the 9-1-1 service's effectiveness, more than 650 distance markers were installed on the province's 100-series highways, helping people to more accurately describe their location when calling 9-1-1.

PRIORITY: WORKPLACE SAFETY

Government will participate in inter-jurisdictional initiatives to promote health and safety in the workplace, such as the Atlantic Action Plan Initiative on Occupational Safety and the Cross-Canada Young Worker Initiative, which is designed to address the disproportionate incidence of workplace injuries experienced by workers aged 15 to 24. (Environment and Labour)

Nova Scotia participated in inter-jurisdictional initiatives sponsored by the Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation, which focussed on Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) officer training.

Nova Scotia Environment and Labour's OHS Division continued to work with other Atlantic jurisdictions to explore joint initiatives including an Atlantic Canada version of the Nova Scotia Fish Safe booklet and republishing The Forest Professional. In addition, Nova Scotia hosted regional training workshops for OHS officers throughout Atlantic Canada.

Environment and Labour, along with the Workers' Compensation Board, participated on the national committee that developed the Cross-Canada Young Worker Initiative to improve OHS awareness among youth.

Nova Scotia also supported the National Skills Competition on Workplace Safety.

PRIORITY:
SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITIES

In 2003-2004, government will build on the progress made in prior years by supporting community-based transportation systems, completion of additional municipal drinking water supply protection plans, and committing a further 20 per cent of funding under the Canada-Nova Scotia Infrastructure Program. (Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations)

As of March 31, 2004, nine of 18 counties had inclusive transportation services operating within their boundaries and the Province committed $364,195 toward eight rural community transportation services. The Municipal Drinking Water Supply Protection Plan program funded four studies to better protect Nova Scotia's drinking water. Since the program's inception two years ago, more than 20 projects have been funded.

Under the Canada/Nova Scotia Infrastructure Program, funding was directed toward green projects, designed to ensure effective wastewater management and safe drinking water. As of March 31, 2004, 113 projects worth more than $167.1 million (96.7 per cent of total program value) had been approved; the Provincial funding commitment for 2003-2004 was $9,260,000.

Families and Communities: Measuring Our Performance

INCOME ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS SECURING EMPLOYMENT

Outcome: Strong families, children reaching their potential

What does this measure tell us?

This measure indicates how many Income Assistance recipients have full or part-time employment. Some individuals receiving income support may be employed full or part-time and still be eligible for reduced social assistance benefits if their wages are not sufficient for them to graduate from the program. The figure is calculated every year using the March caseload data.

Since 1999, Income Assistance case loads declined 22 per cent as approximately 3,200 clients found employment. In 2003-2004, the percentage of clients who were successful in finding employment and leaving the program continued to decline to 25 per cent in 2003-2004.

Where do we want to be?

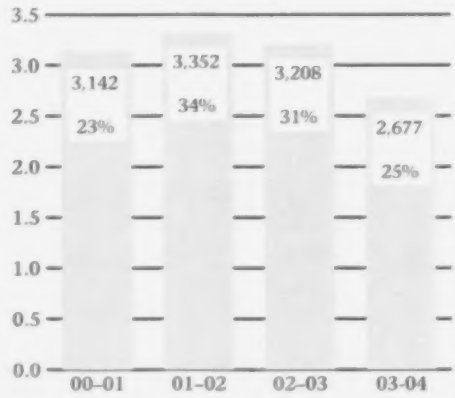
By 2004-2005, the Department of Community Services wants to improve on the 2001-2002 base year percentage by five percent, increasing it to 39 per cent.

Community Services continues to review existing clients' employment readiness, the child care subsidy, providing Pharmacare for up to one year after clients leave the program, and funding for the Department of Education's literacy programs.

Still, increasing the number of Income Assistance clients who find work is becoming more challenging. The remaining clients have multiple barriers to employment: many have not completed high school. Almost 60 per cent have a disability, some face changing family circumstances.

Number and Percentage of Income Assistance Recipients Cases Securing Work

(Thousands)



Source: Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, Employment Support & Income Assistance Division.

OVERALL CRIME RATE

Outcome: Safe Communities

What does this measure tell us?

The overall crime rate indicates how many criminal incidents were reported to the police for violent, property, drug, and other offences, excluding Criminal Code traffic offences. It is a key indicator of social and economic well-being within a society. The number is expressed per 100,000 people so rates can be compared among areas with different populations, and over time.

The crime rate is affected by factors including reporting of criminal incidents by the public, level of police enforcement and police resources, changes in police enforcement practices and changes in law or government policy. The Department of Justice sets policing standards, funds policing services and supports community-based initiatives that prevent crime.

Where are we now?

Nova Scotia's crime rate, like the national crime rate, increased in 2003-2004. Nova Scotia's rose 11 per cent, compared to the national crime rate increase of six per cent. This is the first significant increase in crime rates in more than 10 years.

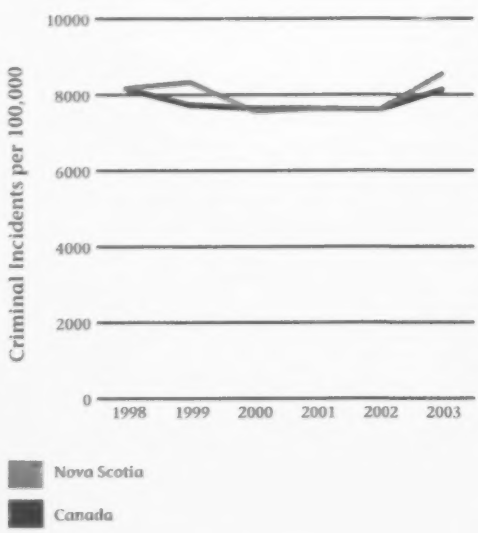
There were 8,552 criminal incidents reported per 100,000 population in Nova Scotia; the national average is 8,132 criminal incidents per 100,000 population. Nova Scotia tended to mirror the national trends regarding the types of increased crime that was reported: counterfeiting, disturbing the peace, mischief, and break and enters.

Where do we want to be?

The Province wants to reduce its crime rate to below the national average and will discuss the reported increases with its Justice partners.

Overall Crime Rate

1998–2003



Source: Statistics Canada: Policy, Planning & Research, Department of Justice.

HIGHWAY INJURIES

Outcome: Safe communities

What does this measure tell us?

Government tracks casualty rates (fatalities and injuries) per 10,000 registered motor vehicles and compares its results with other jurisdictions. Casualty rates are affected by a number of factors including drivers, vehicles, enforcement, education and engineering programs.

The government plays a role through its vehicle safety, highway improvement and driver behaviour initiatives, using the casualty rating to measure how its programs affect highway safety.

Where are we now?

The recorded casualty rate per 10,000 registered motor vehicles has declined every year since 2000, the base year. In 2000, the rate was 123.9; in 2003 was 94.44.

Where do we want to be?

Our objective is to decrease the casualty rate per 10,000 motor vehicles registered. All jurisdictions are working together to achieve national road safety targets. Nova Scotia has continued with 100-series highway twinning and new controlled access road construction, developed and implemented summer and winter performance standards, and developed public education and awareness campaigns regarding the Work Zone Safety Campaign, Operation Christmas, and Winter Safety Day.

Casualty Rates 2000–2002

Year	Fatalities	Injuries	Casualties/ 10K Motor Vehicles Registered
2000	87	6,999	123.9
2001	80	6,327	109.39
2002	88	5,949	102.81
2003	70	5,291	94.44

Source: Nova Scotia Collision Record Database

The Environment

Priorities 2003–2004

Recognizing the importance of the environment to the quality of life of Nova Scotians and to the health of our economy, the Province took significant actions to preserve and improve the environment.

The Province continued to help municipalities ensure that their residents had access to clean, safe water supplies. This support ranged from training for public utility operators and well owners to cost-sharing upgrades to existing water treatment facilities and new treatment plants through the Canada-Nova Scotia Infrastructure Program. In 2003, 95.7 per cent of the population served by municipal water supplies received water meeting the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality.

Progress is being made to restore the environmental health of the province, at the Sydney Tar Ponds, in the Halifax Harbour, in Lunenburg Harbour, to name just a few.

As well, the Government continued to acquire environmentally sensitive areas, to preserve them for generations to come.

PRIORITY:
DRINKING WATER STRATEGY

Under its Drinking Water Strategy, government will work with municipalities to ensure that their water systems can meet current environmental standards. This includes operator training, a program for compliance monitoring, and applying standard reporting and enforcement protocols.
(Environment and Labour)

Government completed all 2003-2004 Drinking Water Strategy action plan commitments on time and within budget. They include:

- developing a due diligence handbook for municipal councillors and public utility commissioners;
- developing public information materials for private well owners;
- prioritizing municipal water supply protection plan requirements and working with municipalities to update/develop new protection plans for priority water supply areas;
- addressing operator training needs;

- working with municipalities to have System Assessment Reports submitted; and developing a program for compliance monitoring of public drinking water systems

PRIORITY: MUNICIPAL DRINKING WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Government will continue to improve the quality of drinking water through investments under the Canada-Nova Scotia Infrastructure Program. (Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations)

Municipal Drinking Water Supply Protection Plans

As of March 31, 2004 this program funded three studies to better protect drinking water in Nova Scotia. Since the program began two years ago, more than 20 projects have been funded.

The Province's Canada-Nova Scotia Infrastructure Program (CNSIP) commitment for 2003-2004 was $9,260,000, with most of the funding going to projects that will improve wastewater management and drinking water safety. Under the program, the federal provincial and municipal levels of government match the provincial investment.

By the end of 2003-2004, the CNSIP had approved 113 projects, worth more than $167.1 million. This represents 85.3 per cent of available CNSIP funding.

PRIORITY: WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FOR THE AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES SECTORS

Work continues on implementing a sustainable water management framework for the agriculture and fisheries sectors. (Agriculture and Fisheries)

The Canada-Nova Scotia Implementation Agreement for the Agricultural Policy Framework and federal programs, such as the National Water Supply Expansion Program, will help agricultural producers to improve their water management.

In Nova Scotia, responsibility for water issues has been consolidated in the department's Resource Stewardship Division. As well, the department continued to invest in better water management through the Farm Investment Fund, which is designed to make farms more viable, safe and environment friendly.

Agriculture and Fisheries also worked to preserve the environment by revising the *Environmental Regulations Handbook for Nova Scotia Agriculture*, to give farmers the latest information they require to know if they are in compliance with environmental regulations and municipal by-laws in the province. As well, the department developed a *Guide for Land Use Planning in Rural Areas* as a guideline for watershed and animal waste management.

PRIORITY: AIR EMISSION TARGETS

Government will amend the Air Quality Regulations to meet sulphur dioxide emission targets in the province's Energy Strategy, and work with major facilities to identify strategies to meet provincial commitments to Canada-wide standards for particulate matter and ozone.
(Energy, Environment and Labour)

Nova Scotia's Air Quality Regulations set a provincial sulphur dioxide (SO_2) emission cap of 189,000 tonnes per year. In 2000, the statistical base year, 170,000 tonnes of SO_2 emissions were released and emissions have declined overall. By 2005, government plans to reduce the annual provincial cap to 141,750 tonnes.

PRIORITY: FOREST STRATEGY

During 2003-2004, government will develop a Code of Forest Practice to guide forest management strategies under the province's Forest Strategy.
(Natural Resources)

The Code of Forest Practice principles document entitled *A Framework for the Implementation of Sustainable Forest Management* underwent a public review process, further revisions and a review by the Forest Technical Advisory Committee and DNR staff. Changes to the Forest Sustainability Regulations and the Registration and Statistical Returns Regulations, with respect to wood chips, metric reporting and various technical changes, were approved in January 2004.

PRIORITY: ACQUIRING PUBLIC LAND

In 2003-2004, government will continue to acquire land with significant recreational and ecological values, and partner with non-governmental organizations, such as the Nature Conservancy of Canada, to obtain land valued by Nova Scotians. (Natural Resources, Environment and Labour)

The Government acquired nine parcels of private land in wilderness areas through the Campaign for Conservation, a four-year $3.3-million partnership between the Province and the Nature Conservancy of Canada. The partnership is to secure critical private lands for the benefit of Nova Scotia's citizens and visitors.

PRIORITY: INTEGRATED FOOD SAFETY PROGRAM

Government will provide a quality evaluation service respecting product standards, food safety, education, research and analytical testing. This includes revised meat inspection regulation, Standards Council of Canada laboratory accreditation, support for farm safety and quality standards, and food safety education programs. (Agriculture and Fisheries)

Responsibility for food safety is shared between Nova Scotia's Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. In 2003-2004, both agencies continued to formalize their respective roles and responsibilities to ensure better service delivery.

During the past year, Agriculture and Fisheries helped to implement the Food Safety and Quality standards, part of a national effort to establish food safety targets and indicators. To better target enforcement activities, the department adopted a risk-based approach to meat inspections and more staff were hired to enhance Nova Scotia's ability to respond to animal disease threats such as avian flu.

PRIORITY:
FISHERY-AQUACULTURE

Government will implement an environmental monitoring regime for the aquaculture sector, participate in the development of a national aquatic animal health program, and participate on a joint project with UPEI to graduate new fish veterinarians. (Agriculture and Fisheries)

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries implemented its Environmental Monitoring Plan, and helped to develop a new National Aquatic Animal Health Program that will co-ordinate existing programs and address programming gaps. The Province's plan was ready, the fish health lab was expanded, a new technician was hired, and critical equipment was purchased. Federal funding approval was still outstanding at the end of the Province's fiscal year.

Efforts to train new fish veterinarians at UPEI were cancelled because of a lack of funding from the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency.

PRIORITY:
FARM ENVIRONMENTAL RISK MANAGEMENT

In 2003-2004, government will inject an additional $500,000 to accelerate environmental farm planning. This money will place more people in the field to assist farmers with their environmental plans. As well, government will move forward on the development of nutrient-management training, funded through the Farm Investment Fund. (Agriculture and Fisheries)

As promised, $500,000 was invested to accelerate the Nova Scotia Environmental Farm Plan in 2003-2004, with a further commitment for equal investments in 2004-2005 and 2005-2006.

The Environmental Farm Plan is a priority in Nova Scotia and a key element of sustainable agricultural development. Farmers who want to access federal/provincial cost-shared farm programs must have an environmental farm plan and approximately 400 farmers are enrolled in the program. The province is in discussions with the Government of Canada about linking eligibility for other programs to environmental practices.

In 2003-2004, through the Farm Investment Fund, the government committed $4.4 million to 1,900 projects designed to make farms viable, safer and more environment friendly.

PRIORITY: SYDNEY TAR PONDS

In late May, the Joint Action Group will present a clean-up recommendation to government, based on their spring 2003 consultations with residents of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, regarding residents' preferred clean-up options for the Sydney Tar Ponds. (Sydney Tar Ponds Agency, Sydney Environmental Resources)

More than 1,700 CBRM citizens responded to JAG's workbook survey regarding the remediation and clean-up of the tar ponds and coke oven sites. The community's preferred clean-up option was co-burning. Various pre-treatment options were also endorsed because they enhanced the clean-up efforts and provided the most potential for community involvement.

PRIORITY: WASTE AND SEWAGE DISPOSAL

The Government of Nova Scotia will contribute $32 million over 15 years to the Halifax Harbour Solutions Project. This includes two parcels of land in Dartmouth valued at $2 million. The province will also support similar projects in Sydney and Lunenburg, and other locations, under the Canada-Nova Scotia Infrastructure Program. (Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations)

With the Province's firm commitment to the Halifax Regional Municipality's Harbour Solutions Project in place, work on the collection system started in 2003-2004. The first of 15 $2-million installments was made in March 2003 and progress was made on the land transfer.

The Harbour Solutions Project should be completed in four years at a cost of about $333 million. The Halifax Regional Municipality is financing the project through federal/provincial funding ($60 million and $30 million respectively) and through two borrowings: $110 million from the Municipal Finance Corporation and $20 million from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. The balance ($111 million) will be paid from HRM's pollution control reserves and additional levies.

The new Lunenburg sewage treatment plant was completed in 2003-2004 and at the Sydney Harbour clean-up project, the collection infrastructure is complete and work has begun on a sewage treatment plant.

PRIORITY: KYOTO PROTOCOL

Government will be active in Canada-wide efforts following federal ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. We will endeavour to protect the competitiveness of Nova Scotia industries and recognize actions already taken to reduce emissions. Adjustments will be made to the provincial Climate Change Strategy, as Nova Scotia's obligations under the Protocol are clarified.
(Energy, Environment and Labour)

As the national policy process becomes clearer, Nova Scotia, as chair of the provincial/territorial working group, is working with the federal government and other jurisdictions on the design of major program elements.

In 2003-2004, progress included:

- setting caps for large emitters;
- building a monitoring program to ensure emissions stay within prescribed limits and to maintain an up-to-date inventory;
- participating in programs to improve energy efficiency in schools, to share municipal energy conservation best practices and to create an Atlantic Alternative Energy Centre. Nova Scotia has submitted four projects – worth $11,765,000 – in this federal/provincial cost-shared program;
- Nova Scotia also began identifying how the province could be affected by climate change and how the impact could be reduced.

PRIORITY: CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH

Government will continue climate change research aimed at understanding how climate influences agricultural production.
(Agriculture and Fisheries)

Through the National Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Program, the department established outreach programs to demonstrate climate change management and technologies on farms. As well, a Canada Research Chair in Agricultural Resource Management was established at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College.

The Environment: Measuring Our Performance

DRINKING WATER QUALITY

Outcome: Healthy environment

What Does This Measure Tell Us?

This measure helps to provide an overall picture of access to quality drinking water. It also helps to gauge the effectiveness of the *Guidelines for Monitoring Public Drinking Water Supplies and the Water and Wastewater Facility Regulations*.

Health Canada, together with provincial health and environment ministries has established the *Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality*. This document specifies health-based criteria for a number of parameters, including bacteria content. Government tracks the proportion of people serviced by municipal water supplies that have access to drinking water meeting the health-based criteria for bacteriological quality.

The Department of Environment and Labour's boil water advisory database provides an improved municipal water quality tracking system, based on health-based criteria for coliform bacteria in the Guidelines.

Where are we now?

In this province, 54 per cent of Nova Scotians get their drinking water from municipal water supplies.

In 2003, 95.7 per cent of the population served by municipal water supplies received water meeting the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality at all times during the calendar year; down slightly from 96.5 per cent reported in 2001 and 2002.

Where do we want to be?

Our target for 2004-2005 is to maintain or increase the percentage of the population served by municipal water supplies that meet the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality. We will do this by implementing the drinking water strategy, supporting development of municipal water supply protection plans and enforcing the Water and Wastewater Facility Regulations, including the Guidelines for Monitoring Public Water Supplies.

SULPHUR DIOXIDE EMISSIONS

Outcome: Healthy Environment

What Does The Measure Tell Us?

Clean air is an essential component of a healthy environment and human health, and sulphur dioxide (SO_2) emission levels is a major air cleanliness measure. It is the main contributor to acid rain and can have significant effects on human health. Government has established a realistic and measurable target for the reduction of SO_2 to promote cleaner air, a healthier environment and healthier Nova Scotians.

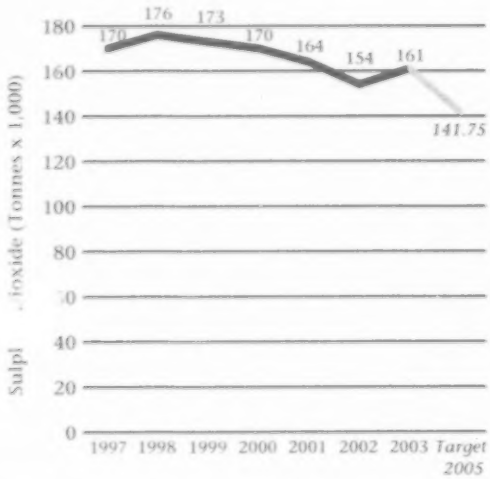
Where are we now?

Nova Scotia's Air Quality Regulations establish an annual provincial measurable target for the reduction of SO_2 to emission cap of 189,000 tonnes. In 2003, approximately 161,000 tonnes of measurable target for the reduction of SO_2 to were emitted in the province, primarily through major industrial sources, up from approximately 154,000 tonnes the year before. Sulphur dioxide emissions have fluctuated over the past four years but have declined from the 2000 base year measure: 170,000 tonnes. Preliminary National Pollutant Release Inventory data was used to determine measurable target for the reduction of SO_2 emissions for 2003 and this number may vary once the final numbers are released.

Where do we want to be?

Proposed regulatory amendments underwent public review this year, including the proposal to lower this cap to 141,750 tonnes per year by 2005. The department will work with major industries and establish a lower sulphur fuels requirement to reduce SO_2 emissions.

Nova Scotia Sulphur Dioxide Emissions



Source: Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Labour, National Pollutant Release Inventory. Data for 2003 is estimated.

SOLID WASTE DIVERSION

Outcome: Healthy Environment

What does the measure tell us?

This measure tells us the percentage of waste that goes into composting, recycling, etc., instead of a landfill site, on a per person basis, in each region.

Waste diversion rates are calculated for seven solid waste regions across the province. Although the provincial goal has been met, diversion rates fluctuate from year to year in each of the regions.

Nova Scotia was the first province to reach an overall solid waste diversion rate of 50 per cent per capita, a goal set by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment and agreed upon by all provinces.

Where are we now?

In 2003-2004, no solid waste management region reached a diversion rate of 50 per cent. Although solid waste diversion rates were lower than expected, recycling and composting volumes have increased. The lower diversion rates may be attributed to increased economic growth that resulted in greater than anticipated volumes of construction and demolition debris.

Where do we want to be?

Government is working with the regions to achieve a 50 per cent solid waste diversion rate in all of the regions by 2004-2005.

ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLANS

Outcome: Sustainable environment

What does the measure tell us?

This measure tells us the percentage of registered farmers who are participating in the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture's Environmental Farm Plan initiative. Increasing the number of participants will help to preserve soil, water, air and biodiversity resources.

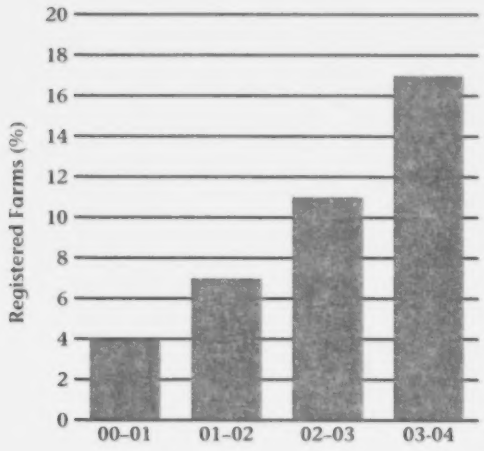
Where are we now?

As of March 2004, approximately 400 farms (16.7 per cent of registered farms) were participating in the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) initiative. There has been a steady increase in the percentage of participating farms over the years.

Where do we want to be?

By 2004-2005, we want 20 per cent of registered farms to have an Environmental Farm Plan in place.

Percentage of Registered Farms with Environmental Farm Plans



Source: Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

LONG-RANGE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORKS (CROWN LAND)

Outcome:
Sustainable development

What does this measure tell us?

Long-range management frameworks support sound decision making related to the use and management of Crown lands. They are a database of information and features about the parcel and the long term goals and objectives for the area. The measure indicates the progress being made in implementing these frameworks.

Where are we now?

During 2002-2003, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) started a long range management framework pilot project for the Mulgrave Plateau eco-district. This framework will be a model for Nova Scotia's other eco-districts. Although the initial framework was not in place by the end of the year, DNR feels strongly that completeness and accuracy is more important than speed because the framework will have implications for the Crown land covered by the frameworks for decades to come.

Where do we want to be?

Eventually frameworks will be prepared for each of the province's 39 eco-districts. DNR originally proposed to have frameworks in place for 50 per cent of Crown land by the end of 2004-2005. This target was overly ambitious and the department now feels that it will take five to seven years to have initial long-range management frameworks in place for all eco-districts.

ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES RECOVERY PLANS

Outcome:
Sustainable environment

What Does This Measure Tell Us?

The measure indicates how much work is underway to restore the health of endangered and threatened species of flora and fauna. Recovery plans required under the Endangered Species Act are now being prepared that establish, for each endangered and threatened species, what needs to be done, how much it will cost, when it will be done and who will do the work. The plans establish the criteria needed to move a species to a lower risk category (i.e., from endangered to threatened).

Where are we now?

Recovery plans are to be in place for each endangered species within one year after the species was listed as being endangered, and within two years for those species listed as being threatened.

As of March 31, 2004, recovery plans were required for 14 of the 19 species listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Plans were in place for 12 species, an increase of one species since the end of 2002-2003.

Where do we want to be?

Our target is to have recovery plans in place for all 19 species by 2004-2005.

SILVICULTURE (PRIVATE AND INDUSTRIAL LANDS)

Outcome:
Sustainable Environment

What Does This Measure Tell Us?

Sustainability of the provincial wood supply can be effectively managed through an aggressive silviculture program. The measure tells us whether the level of silviculture activity being carried out is sufficient to maintain a sustainable wood supply.

Silviculture credits, measured on a calendar year, are used to convert the volume of wood harvested each year to the area of silviculture required each year to replace the amount of wood harvested. The higher the level of harvest, the more silviculture (and therefore more credits) must be done to ensure a future supply of wood is available.

Where are we now?

During 2003, 9.6 million silviculture credits were required and 15.2 million credits were claimed. As a result, completed silviculture was 159 per cent of the required amount, an increase from the 130 per cent recorded in 2002.

Where do we want to be?

DNR's overall goal is to ensure that enough silviculture takes place each year to at least replace the amount of wood harvested. Numerically, that means that silviculture credits claimed must measure 100 per cent or more of the silviculture credits required.

Government Services

Priorities for 2003–2004

The Province offers a wide range of products and services designed to protect Nova Scotians and to improve the quality of life. These range from protecting consumers to running government operations in an effective and efficient manner to encouraging skilled and qualified candidates to join the public service.

During 2003-2004, the Province moved to protect consumers from increasing automobile insurance premiums. After dialogue with consumers and insurance companies, measures were introduced that reduced premiums for many Nova Scotian motorists.

Progress continued on significant government online services, including online procurement, more online historic and cultural exhibits and overall improvements to the "look and feel" of the Province's websites.

Seven counties adopted the Province's new land registration system, which will mean faster, more convenient real estate transactions for property buyers and owners in the future. By spring 2005, all of Nova Scotia will be using the new system.

PRIORITY:
CONSUMER PROTECTION

Government will appoint an auto insurance advocate, who will provide outreach to consumer groups, seniors and others, and bring a consumer perspective to the policy options to be considered by government.
(Environment and Labour)

Building on public consultation and the recommendations of the Consumer Advocate, a comprehensive automobile insurance reform package was developed which included changes to five statutes and the introduction of three new regulations. These initiatives helped to stabilize automobile insurance premiums, while providing better protection and fairness for consumers.

PRIORITY: FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Government will continue implementation of the SAP enterprise resource planning tool and help to make the software available to municipalities, school boards and other sectors. (Office of Economic Development, Finance, Public Service Commission, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations)

Together, the Province and the school boards launched the Corporate Human Resources Management Project (SAP-HR / Project eMerge), the largest SAP public sector initiative in Nova Scotia. This is a multi-year project with several phases. The project will provide a new payroll and human resource management system. The first phase, which established the scope of the project, was completed in January–February, 2003. The blueprint phase, capturing business requirements, was completed through a series of facilitated workshops.

Partnerships are being formed between the Province and municipalities as enhanced information technology solutions are implemented in the area of financial accounting, administration and reporting, and geographic information systems. SAP financial software is being enhanced by the development of water utility and property tax billing modules, making the system more functional to municipal government.

PRIORITY: E-PROCUREMENT

Government will develop an electronic procurement action plan to define priority projects that will benefit municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals. (Transportation and Public Works)

Due to departmental restructuring, this priority was transferred to the Office of Economic Development.

An electronic procurement (e-procurement) plan was developed and there was significant progress on two key initiatives. The first is the implementation of a government procurement card to simplify low value local purchases and payments to vendors. The cards will be phased in during 2004-2005.

The second, a Tender Opportunities Notification Service (TONS), is also under development. This system will electronically notify Nova Scotia businesses of tender opportunities in their field(s) of specialization. Developed with the participation of the Nova Scotia Business Registry, the system should be operational in October 2004.

PRIORITY: GOVERNMENT IT SERVICES

The Province will assess current and future Data Centre needs for the storage and management of electronic information, and develop a request for proposals for those requirements.
(Transportation and Public Works, Office of Economic Development)

Presentations regarding the review of the government's Data Centre and IT Infrastructure Service needs were made to the IT Directors Forum, the Business Technology Advisory Committee and to Deputy Ministers. A Memorandum to Executive Council, defining the project and its scope, was drafted and approved.

PRIORITY: PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION RESTRUCTURING

Government will implement the recommendations of a project to improve human resource management by making structural and cultural changes to the Public Service Commission, defining and assigning clear HR roles and responsibilities, and promoting effective HR management by line managers.
(Public Service Commission)

During 2003-2004, the Public Service Commission shifted from a transactional to a strategic organization, moving operational transactions to line departments. This new structure will provide optimal service delivery to the PSC's clients.

In May 2003, the PSC's senior management team developed a work plan for all 24 project recommendations identified in the New Directions and Opportunities Report. Of the 13 short-term recommendations, eight were completed in 2003-2004. Of the 10 medium-term recommendations (12-18 months), three were completed in 2003-2004. The one long-term recommendation (24 months) was reviewed and will be completed in 2005/2006.

Recommendations implemented in this fiscal year include: career profiles for senior management positions; new job descriptions for administrative staff; clearly defined accountabilities for each of the PSC's divisions; outcomes, deliverables and reporting mechanisms established by each senior leadership team member; adherence to policies and best HR management practices, improving transparency of PSC's operations; hiring a director for its audit and evaluation function; defined minimum capabilities required of HR Client Service Units to fulfil their responsibilities appropriately; HR Forum and HR Managers' Forum re-established.

PRIORITY: SUCCESSION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

To ensure that key positions in government are filled by qualified persons, the province will develop a corporate succession plan that focuses on youth recruitment, employee development and better tools to support recruitment, training and development. For 2003-2004, the focus will be on executive leadership, human resources, finance and young professionals.
(Public Service Commission)

Effective government-wide workforce planning is needed to ensure that key positions are filled by qualified people. A corporate succession management strategy was presented to the HR Forum and Deputy Ministers to plan for future needs. This strategy includes:

Career Starts

This program provides young Nova Scotians with practical employment experience and promotes the provincial civil service as a viable career path. In 2003-2004, four youth and diversity employment programs were grouped together under the Career Starts Program to improve their administration and promotion. The programs were the Post Secondary Internship Program, Co-operative Employment Program, Summer Female

Mentorship Program, and Summer Diversity Program. A new marketing package was developed, including an updated website, new brochures, promotional items, and a portable display. Also new during 2003-2004, internships were focussed around target areas that were deemed difficult-to-fill and critical to the future of the public service.

Leadership Continuity Program

Developed in early 2004 as a key strategy to address critical HR issues, such as an aging workforce and increasing retirement rates, leadership continuity is a strategy to create a pool of highly talented individuals who can be developed for non-specific leadership roles. In February 2004, 23 middle managers and six senior managers were identified to be participants in the program.

Executive Career Assignment Program

This program, launched in 2002 as a pilot, was completed in March 2004. The six participants were given job assignments. All six participants are still in the public service, five in new senior positions.

Career Assignment Program

The purpose of this program, designed in partnership with the Government of Canada, is to develop leaders for the future. Between August and November 2003, cross-departmental assignments were identified for each of the three participants. Participant attended training components and created their individual learning and performance plans.

Diversity Management

The Public Service Commission continued to promote meaningful change in diversity management through ongoing education targeted to key leadership groups. PSC staff helped Correctional Services to prepare an Employment Systems Review Report and trained diversity trainers for Restorative Justice employees.

In 2003-2004, 66 people attended in the Diversity For Leaders Program, 249 people participated in the Diversity Equity Education Program, and 20 people in Affirmative Action groups were placed in short-term casual employment.

HR Strategy for Functional Communities.

Strategies are being developed to address human resources needs of key government communities such as finance, HR, IT and policy. These strategies will result in customized HR tools and aids to better recruit, develop, manage and recognize their employees.

The first strategy, for the Financial Community, includes nine projects that should be completed by the end of December, 2004. In 2003-2004, a team was established to co-ordinate the development of an HR strategy. External consultants conducted focus groups, interviews and surveys, and reported to the committees.

Leadership Development and Skills Training

In 2003-2004, 1,795 employees attended PSC programs designed to enhance their management, people and computer skills.

Executive Recruitment Program

The PSC is focussing recruitment efforts in areas of high need in government, including executive level positions. Development of an attraction and retention strategy for executive positions that will promote the public service as a "preferred employer" has begun. An online manager's hiring toolkit was developed to support executive recruitment efforts.

PRIORITY: INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Government will continue development of systems, processes and tools that will improve employee communications.
(Treasury and Policy Board)

Treasury and Policy Board tasked Communications Nova Scotia to lead this initiative. A project team was established late in 2003-2004 that will develop a communications tool kit to help managers better share corporate goals and objectives with staff, and better engage managers in organizational communications overall. The team was to report in 2004-2005.

PRIORITY: WEBSITE IMPROVEMENTS

Changes to government websites will be introduced to make them more user friendly and to increase e-government services.
(Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, with many others)

The Website Improvement Project, sponsored by several Deputy Ministers, was established in May 2002 to develop a corporate approach to website governance and management.

Much of the project was completed between May 2002 and March 2003. In 2003-2004, the project added many improvements to the government website. However, budget pressures across

government reduced the funding needed to establish a core Internet Services group and the project came to an end.

PRIORITY: RED TAPE REDUCTION

Red tape reduction will continue to be a priority for all government departments and agencies. (All government departments and agencies)

The Department of Environment and Labour (DEL) implemented a risk-based system for environmental enforcement which focuses inspections where the risk for environmental harm is greatest. Since its introduction on April 1, 2002, the risk-based inspection system was applied in 259 industrial approvals.

Nova Scotia continued to work, in partnership with Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador, on revisions to the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Accord Implementation Act that would provide industry with a consistent set of requirements in the two offshore areas while ensuring that offshore workers were protected by safety standards that were at least as high as those applicable to workers onshore.

In an effort to support government's ongoing "one-window" service delivery approach for businesses and individuals, Environment & Labour's Public Safety worked with Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations on a proposal that the latter handle billing and collection for more DEL licences.

The Province worked actively toward establishing one common set of insurance industry regulations in the Atlantic region and approved harmonized General Insurance Agent Regulations in early 2004. As automobile insurance emerged as a common issue, the Council of Atlantic Premiers established the Atlantic Canada Insurance Harmonization Task Force in June 2003, with a mandate to study impacts and options of an Atlantic Canadian public automobile insurance system, to develop a harmonized legislative and regulatory framework for private auto insurance in the region, and to draft harmonized legislation for other Atlantic insurance products.

At the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF), weed control regulations were updated and more than 70 sets of food shop regulations were to be consolidated in a new Health Protection Act in Spring 2004. DAF is also working with other departments to streamline service delivery and regulations, and to lower costs to clients.

The Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage and the accommodation industry worked together to amend the Tourist Accommodation Act and regulations. The amendments, which came into effect on October 16, 2003, reduce the overall number of regulations facing industry operators.

PRIORITY: REGULATORY POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Government will develop a policy framework to achieve greater consistency, effectiveness and transparency in the management of regulatory processed administered by the Department of Environment and Labour. (Environment and Labour)

Government will examine the Business Electronic Filing Act to improve security and authentication requirements for e-government and the Companies Act to address outdated requirements, and the Co-Operative Associations Act dealing with the issuance fo preferred shares. (Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations)

Environment and Labour developed a draft policy and process guide designed to improve the consistency, cost-effectiveness and transparency of the department's regulatory processes. The model was piloted in 2003-2004 and is to be implemented department-wide in 2004-2005.

Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations (SNSMR) developed a policy framework for online authentication of business registrations. As well, SNSMR was actively involved in a federal/provincial/territorial working group on Identity Authentication and Authorization. This will lead to aligning authentication and digital signature regulations with emerging national and international standards.

PRIORITY: IMPROVED ACCESS TO SERVICE

Government will identify and develop services which are feasible for electronic service delivery. More licences, permits and application processes will be handled through the Nova Scotia Business Registry, improving access and payment options while decreasing transaction costs to government. (Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations)

More business licences, permits, registrations, certifications and information can be obtained through the online Nova Scotia Business Registry (NSBR), including elevator and lift licences from the Department of Environment and Labour. Clients can now search the NSBR to confirm a Nova Scotia driving instructor's licence status. Business cases were developed and analyses were conducted on other projects that will expand NSBR's services in 2004-2005.

A new online Lien Check service was developed which will allow clients to perform searches on personal property such as cars, boats, aircraft and outboard engines. This service will be offered in

co-ordination with the other Atlantic Provinces through the Atlantic Canada Online service and should be available in 2004-2005.

Also planned for 2004-2005 is a new service that would allow people to pay their motor vehicle fines online. This would give people a more convenient way to pay fines; complementing an online parking ticket payment service offered by the Halifax Regional Municipality.

SNSMR is investigating implementation strategies for a new Internet-based service that clients could use to request personalized vehicle licence plates, starting in 2004-2005.

PRIORITY: LAND REGISTRATION

New counties will be added to the roll-out of the province's new land registration system. (Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations)

SNSMR reviewed the first implementation of the Province's new land registration system in Colchester County to ensure that improvements could be made while maintaining the provincewide roll-out on schedule. In December 2003, the new land registration system was expanded to seven more counties, providing land owners in those counties with access to guaranteed title. The system should be in use provincewide by spring 2005.

Property tax data from several municipalities was integrated with property registrations and new scanning technology was added at Registries of Deeds, making more information and documents accessible online. As well, new technology was installed in most registry offices and steps were taken to link property registrations to the civic address file.

PRIORITY: ACCESS TO HERITAGE RESOURCES

Public access to archive and museum resources will be enhanced through improved online services. (Tourism, Culture and Heritage)

The department expanded its online products and services, enhanced public access to archive and museum resources. A number of new products including virtual exhibits, digitized holdings and searchable databases were added to the Archives' website, resulting in a 62 per cent increase in website visits (406,000 in 2003-2004). Specific products included:

- Lunenburg by the Sea: 250 Years of Challenge and Change.
- An Acadian Parish Remembered: The Registers of St. Jean-Baptiste, Annapolis Royal, 1702-1755.
- African Nova Scotians in the Age of Slavery and Abolition.

- Bluenose: A Canadian Icon.
- Land Petitions 1769-1799.
- McAlpine's Nova Scotia Directory, 1907-08.

The department also secured $54,000 in federal funding for an interactive online resource built around the theme of Nova Scotia and the Sea.

PRIORITY: BUSINESS PLANNING, BUDGET AND ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

Government will develop a framework to connect the planning, budgeting, and accountability components of the performance cycle. The framework will be included in the management manual along with user guides for department and agency staff. (Treasury and Policy Board, Finance)

A Business Planning, Budgeting and Accountability Framework was drafted by March 31, 2004 for Cabinet approval. The framework explains the linkages between planning, budgeting and accountability, and describes the rationale of environmental scanning, operational planning, and performance measurement and evaluation.

It is expected that the framework will be published in the Management Manual in 2004-2005 and that a user guide would be available to explain each component to departments and agencies. Training and development plans will also be developed, together with communication and implementation plans.

PRIORITY: EVALUATION POLICY

By March 31, 2004, the policy development process will be in place, together with an assessment of government's evaluation capacity and research on best practices for the evaluation of government services (Treasury and Policy Board)

Preliminary research on best practices and the need for evaluation was carried out. Presentations regarding the value-added through evaluation were presented to Deputy Ministers. Due to a vacancy, this priority is on hold.

Government Services: Measuring Our Performance

BUSINESS PLANNING

Outcome: Open and accountable government

What does this measure tell us?

A select group of Ministers, Deputy Ministers and senior government officials were surveyed to determine whether there was an appropriate level of co-ordination and support from Treasury and Policy Board during the annual business planning, budgeting and accountability reporting processes.

Where are we now?

- The majority (57 per cent) of respondents who were part of the business planning process in their department said they were somewhat satisfied with the co-ordination and support they received, while seven per cent said they were very satisfied.
- Again, 57 per cent of respondents who had helped to prepare the departmental budget said they were somewhat satisfied with the process, while eight per cent were very satisfied.
- Of those who worked on their department's accountability report, 70 per cent said they were somewhat satisfied with the process, while 18 per cent were very satisfied.

Where do we want to be?

We will work to increase the percentage of departmental staff who are very satisfied with the business planning, budgeting or accountability reporting process, starting with an action plan. As well, guidelines for performance measures developed in 2003-2004 will be incorporated into the Accountability Framework and, upon Cabinet approval, published in the Management Manuals.

We will conduct a comprehensive review of existing business planning, budgeting and accountability reporting practices to make them more useful to our stakeholders.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

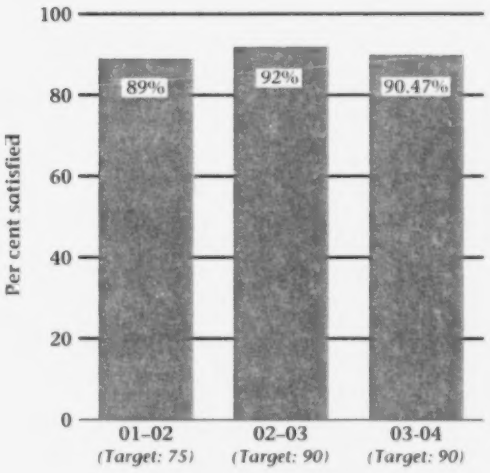
Outcome: Accessible government

What does the measure tell us?

Government aims to deliver programs and services in ways that are both cost-effective and also improve the quality of services. Maintaining a steady pulse on customers' expectations and experiences with the delivery of government services provides valuable information as to where best to focus attention to continually improve the delivery of services.

The overall customer satisfaction percentage is a measure that was determined from customer satisfaction surveys performed during the last three fiscal years. Customer satisfaction is a key variable indicating whether Government is achieving its desire to be open and accountable to customer concerns and expectations, and to provide responsible, accountable governance.

Customer Satisfaction



Source: Surveys conducted in Access Nova Scotia Centres, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations

Where are we now?

Based on exit surveys conducted at Access Nova Scotia and Registry of Motor Vehicle locations, government achieved customer satisfaction levels of slightly greater than 90 per cent. This figure includes customers who indicated they were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the overall services they received.

Where do we want to be?

Government wishes to maintain an overall client satisfaction rate of 90 per cent.

NOVA SCOTIA